



## Joining the PSSA – what do I get for my money?

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### Who or what is the PSSA?

The Pharmaceutical Society of South Africa (PSSA) is a voluntary association of pharmacy professionals. Originally, only pharmacists were permitted to join, but over the years, it became obvious that there are other personnel that could benefit from membership, such as pharmacist's assistants.

### Why should pharmacist's assistants be included?

It was recognised years ago that properly educated and trained pharmacist's assistants are key to providing efficient and effective pharmaceutical services in this country.

Over the years, pharmacist's assistants have shown that they make a valuable contribution to pharmacy practice. They form a significant part of the pharmacist's team, and are bound by the same laws and rules that control a pharmacist's professional practice.

As part of the pharmacy team, it makes perfect sense that pharmacist's assistants should also benefit from the work of the PSSA. Pharmacist's assistants are welcomed as associate members of the PSSA.

### How can the PSSA help you?

#### Discussions with people in authority

There are so many bodies that either control or influence the practice of pharmacists and pharmacist's assistants. Think about it – there are so many laws that affect our practice. When something apparently small is changed, it may have huge impact on our practice. The PSSA will monitor changes, and will discuss them both with those in authority, e.g. the National Department of Health, and those whose job it is to implement the changes, e.g. Heads of Pharmaceutical Services and Responsible Pharmacists in all categories of pharmacy. Importantly, the PSSA will interact with the SA Pharmacy Council when new rules or guidelines are considered.

#### We're only a phone call away

Or, nowadays, we're more likely to be only an email away. There are times when you may need advice and support from the PSSA

offices. While they may not have all the answers, they usually know who you can ask.

#### Your local branch of the PSSA and SAAHIP

Both the PSSA and two of its sectors (i.e. the South African Association of Hospital and Institutional Pharmacy as well as the South African Association of Community Pharmacists) may have a local branch in the area in which you live or work. Why not get involved with them? Not only will you benefit by forming a relationship with them, but they will benefit from your experience as well.

A suggestion here – speak to your local branch about setting up a pharmacist's assistants group within the branch. You're not alone in facing the challenges of working in pharmacy!

#### Communication and information

The PSSA will provide you with reliable information and relevant news in a number of ways.

For example

- The South African Pharmaceutical Journal (SAPJ)
- The South African Pharmacist's Assistant (SAPA) journal, which you are reading now! SAPA is geared specifically to the pharmacist's assistant. You are also welcome to share your opinions as a letter to the editor.
- The PSSA website
- Electronic newsletters
- Social media

#### Human resource matters

When PSSA members need help with human resource related issues, they are welcome to contact the PSSA for advice. If labour law is part of an issue that you are facing, members are able to have free telephonic advice.

#### Professional Indemnity Insurance

While we don't want to be obsessed with the professional risks that we face, we must remember that everyone working in a pharmacy may make a mistake when working under pressure. If you make a

dispensing error, you will be held responsible, even though you work under the supervision of a pharmacist.

### **Keeping your knowledge up to date**

The PSSA offers continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities in a number of convenient ways. These include attending a CPD evening at your branch, as well as online webinars that you can attend from home.

The PSSA has an agreement to supply the Alpha Pharm distance learning programme at a discounted rate. Five different diseases are

studied during the year, and you are able to test your knowledge online.

### **There's a home for everyone!**

No matter what your area of practice is, there is a home for you in the PSSA branches and sectors. Use your initiative – make contact and get involved. You will find contact details on the PSSA website ([www.pssa.org.za](http://www.pssa.org.za)). We look forward to welcoming you!