



## THE SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIETY OF OTORHINOLARYNGOLOGY HEAD AND NECK SURGERY

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### President's Report 2020

#### **Covid 19:**

The past year has been a tumultuous year for the entire world and for the medical fraternity in particular.

Covid 19 struck and we were all at a loss as to how to practise our profession or whether we should be working at all for that matter.

A frenzy of activities followed with the setting up of protocols / safe-practice techniques, etc. and we watched as the chaos unfolded throughout the world.

South Africa has, largely, been spared the brunt of the worst infections but we all, with bated breath, are watching to see what transpires as the Covid 19 virus continues to wreak havoc in what appears to be a second wave of infections.

The Society has continued to function on a virtual platform and will also be having our first ever virtual annual congress this year.

#### **Academic Activities:**

The academic institutions have all continued, and in certain cases, increased their activities in this new virtual world and have acquitted themselves extremely well, despite these testing and trying times. This is largely due to the fact that all the academic departments now have a full time head at the helm. The departments have also submitted numerous articles for publication in international and local journals viz The University of Free State 6, The University of Witwatersrand 18, The University of Cape Town 37, The University of KwaZulu-Natal 5 and The University of Stellenbosch 6.

We have been privileged to have enjoyed excellent University of Pretoria webinars, UCT-Africa Virtual ENT meetings as well as a host of monthly journal clubs in the comfort of our homes in response to the pandemic.

#### **College of Medicine:**

This year the College of Medicine introduced Virtual Zoom-based oral exams for our registrars. These were a world first and ensured that the final exams were not cancelled and these will continue into the future.



### **Finances of the Society:**

The finances of the Society have taken a bit of a knock, largely due to unfavorable market conditions for our investments, reduced income as a result of the membership fee rebates the Exco has extended to our members and reduced Congress income. The finances are, however, still extremely sound and thanks goes to our Treasurer Jacques Viljoen for his sterling work in this regard.

### **Billing Issues:**

A disturbing trend has appeared of late with a substantial increase in forensic audits of our members. I urge all members to educate themselves with regards to the correct billing of their patients and advise members to consult with our tariff committee or the HealthMan office should they have any queries in this regard.

Our members are now confronted by markedly reduced income and an inability to operate as a result of Covid infections overwhelming the hospitals. This has highlighted the low rate of remuneration that we, as ENT surgeons, receive for our consultative work in relation to the consulting disciplines. A further revelation is how a large proportion of our membership have signed DSP arrangements with Medical Aids at rates that are not covering the costs of running their practices. The Exco will continue to assist in trying to negotiate better fees for our members together with the groups that we are members of such as SAPPF.

### **Merit Awards:**

We have received numerous nominations for Merit awards from our members and these will be adjudicated and awarded at our congress in 2021.

### **Vote of Thanks:**

I would like to thank the Exco for their invaluable input throughout the year as well as our secretary Janette Pieters for the way she has been able to adapt in these trying times.

HealthMan has assisted us in setting up all of our virtual activities and we are indebted to them for thus allowing us to continue with "business as usual" in our Society.

I wish all members the very best for the year ahead and urge you all to act responsibly and stay safe during this Covid 19 pandemic.

John H Black  
President: SA Society of ORL HNS