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SASOHN NEWSLETTER

Forward from the President

As we approach the end of 2024, I would like to take a moment to reflect on the remarkable strides made by our members in the field of Occupational health nursing. This year has been an incredible journey of growth, resilience, and commitment to improving the health and safety of workers across industries.

As we reflect on the year gone by, we are filled with immense gratitude for the unwavering dedication and passion of our SASOHN members. This year, we have faced new challenges, yet together, we have shown resilience, innovation, and a deep commitment to the health and safety of workers across all industries. Each one of you play an integral role in advancing the field of occupational health nursing and ensuring the well-being of those who depend on our expertise. Whether through direct care, advocacy, education, or collaboration, your contributions are making a real difference.

We would like to express pride in our membership growth and especially the hard work and dedication of our regional EXCO teams, please keep up the good work. Our heartfelt thanks to all members that have taken the time to attend meetings, Academic days and conferences, without you the success of these events are truly impossible. We would also like to thank our exhibitors that support us on this journey in a very special way, we appreciate your dedication to all the SASOHN regional and National events. As we transition to 2025, we are excited to continue fostering collaboration, expanding our educational opportunities, and advocating for the advancement of occupational health nursing. Together, we will continue to enhance the health and safety of workers, ensuring that they have the resources, support, and care they need to thrive.

It has been a great privilege to serve as SASOHN President from 2022 -2024 alongside a very dedicated EXCO team. It is our honour to welcome the new SASOHN President, Ms Joan Visser and her amazing EXCO team to move us forward into the next term of office.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment, passion, and contributions to our society. May you have a peaceful and restorative holiday season with your loved ones, and may the New Year bring health, happiness, joy and peace in all aspects of your lives.

Michelle Bester
SASOHN President 2022-2024



Welcome Note from the SASOHN President 2025-2026

- Joan Visser

It is a privilege to step into the role of SASOHN President, and I am deeply grateful for the trust placed in me. My heartfelt thanks go to our outgoing leadership for their dedication and contributions, which have laid a solid foundation for the future.

A special acknowledgment to Mpumalanga for hosting an exceptional National Conference and AGM—your hard work and creativity were truly inspiring.

As we move forward, collaboration will remain central to our success. Together, we will strengthen connections within SASOHN, build partnerships with industry and regulatory bodies, and advocate for initiatives that uplift our profession and enhance worker health.

I envision SASOHN as a beacon of excellence and inclusivity, empowering every member to grow and contribute. Let's work together to advance occupational health, protect lives, and create a healthier future for all.

Thank you for your continued support. Let's make this a remarkable journey together

Office Bearers 2025-2026

We extend our congratulations to all the newly appointed Office Bearers and look forward to their leadership and contributions during their term. Their dedication will undoubtedly enhance the services and initiatives that SASOHN offers to its members and the wider community.



Khanyoh Zuma: National Educational Rep
Joan Visser: National President
Mercia Patience: National Treasurer
Melanie Pillay: National Secretary

Each of our new Office Bearers brings a wealth of experience and a fresh perspective, ready to lead SASOHN into an exciting future. They will play a vital role in shaping the direction of the organization, ensuring that SASOHN continues to provide valuable support to its members and contribute to the development of the occupational health profession.

THE EVOLUTION OF MEDICAL MALPRACTICE INSURANCE



Fifteen years ago, medical malpractice insurance for lower risk medical practitioners was relatively straightforward. There were only a few providers, and their policy wordings were similar, making the process predictable. Policies were placed with minimal fuss, and renewals often required just a no-claims declaration.

However, in 2012, things began to change. Several insurers exited the market, leaving brokers to find alternative solutions. At the same time, the legal landscape shifted as attorneys increasingly targeted medical malpractice cases. A key driver of this was the 2008 Road Accident Fund Amendment Act, which capped damages for road

accidents, pushing many lawyers to focus on medical malpractice. Claims soon skyrocketed, especially with the rise of contingency-based legal services.

We could see a similar trend in the state environment - to put this in perspective, at the end of 2010, the South African government faced R9 billion in outstanding medical malpractice claims. By 2023, this figure had ballooned to over R130 billion. The rise in claims isn't just about lawyers chasing settlements, it reflects a more litigious and aware patient population. People are more informed about their rights, and with advancements in healthcare, their expectations have evolved as well.

Discussions around mandatory malpractice insurance began in 2017, led by the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) and the Department of Health. However, concerns over rising premiums, particularly for high-risk specializations like obstetrics, caused the proposal to be shelved. Nonetheless, many private hospitals now require practitioners to show proof of coverage, even though the insurance remains optional in most sectors.

Adding to the complexity, the rise of social media and telehealth has introduced new risks, from reputational damage to misdiagnoses during virtual consultations. These challenges have made the role of medical malpractice insurance more critical than ever.

Given this increasingly complex and litigious environment, the need for a specialist broker is clear. The stakes are high, and policies have become intricate, with unique wordings and exclusions. A specialist broker can navigate these complexities, ensuring that healthcare professionals are fully protected in a world where one mistake can lead to costly lawsuits.

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WHAT'S NEW IN HIV/AIDS IN SOUTH AFRICA? IMPORTANT UPDATES FOR OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH PRACTITIONERS

South Africa continues to lead globally in HIV/AIDS research and treatment, with new developments and strategies shaping how we address this ongoing public health challenge. Occupational Health Practitioners (OHPs) play a crucial role in supporting workplace programs that combat stigma, promote awareness, and ensure the well-being of employees living with HIV/AIDS. Here's what's new and relevant for OHPs:

1. Introduction of Long-Acting Injectable Antiretrovirals (ARVs)

The South African government, in collaboration with global partners, has begun rolling out long-acting injectable ARVs. These bi-monthly injections offer an alternative to daily oral medication, improving adherence and reducing the stigma often associated with pill regimens. OHPs should prepare to educate employees about this option and its benefits.

2. Advancements in HIV Prevention: PrEP Innovations

Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) remains a cornerstone of HIV prevention. Recent innovations include an extended-release injectable PrEP, providing up to six months of protection. Awareness campaigns are crucial, and workplaces can be pivotal in promoting access to PrEP among employees in high-risk categories.

3. HIV Self-Testing Kits

HIV self-testing kits are becoming widely available in South Africa. This development empowers individuals to take control of their health discreetly. OHPs can incorporate these kits into workplace health programs, ensuring employees are informed about proper usage and follow-up procedures.

4. Integrated HIV and Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD) Care

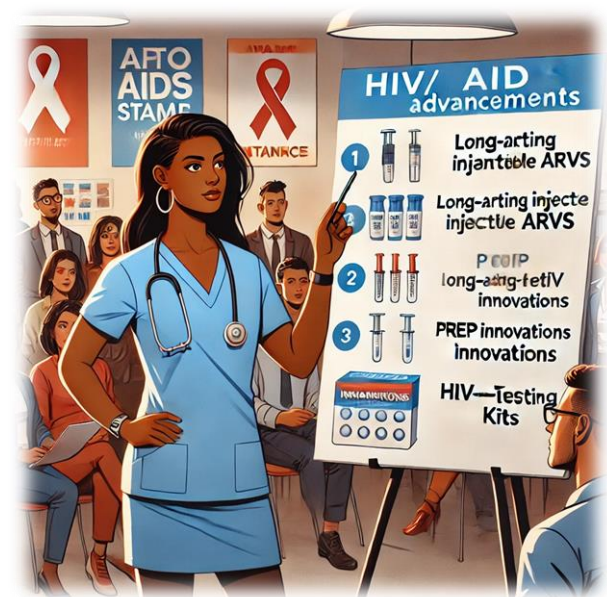
As people with HIV live longer due to effective treatment, the focus has shifted to managing co-morbidities like hypertension, diabetes, and mental health disorders. The integration of HIV and NCD care is essential, and OHPs should advocate comprehensive health monitoring and support services within the workplace.

5. Legal and Policy Updates

South Africa's labor laws emphasize non-discrimination and confidentiality for employees living with HIV. The recent updates reinforce employers' obligations to create inclusive environments and provide access to HIV-related healthcare without prejudice. OHPs should review workplace policies to ensure compliance.

6. Addressing Stigma and Mental Health

HIV-related stigma remains a barrier to testing and treatment adherence. Recent studies highlight the importance of mental health support for individuals living with HIV. OHPs can champion anti-stigma campaigns and provide or refer employees to counseling services.



7. Workplace Vaccination Programs

With the inclusion of HIV-positive individuals in prioritized vaccination schedules for illnesses like influenza and COVID-19, OHPs should ensure workplace vaccination programs address these needs effectively.

Call to Action for OHPs

As frontline advocates for employee health, OHPs should:

- Stay updated on HIV/AIDS advancements.
- Promote workplace policies that support HIV prevention, testing, and treatment.
- Engage employees through education and awareness programs.
- Collaborate with healthcare providers to facilitate access to emerging treatments and services.

By embracing these developments, OHPs can make a significant impact on reducing the burden of HIV/AIDS in South Africa while fostering healthier and more inclusive workplaces.

16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM IN SOUTH AFRICA: A CALL TO ACTION FOR OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH PRACTITIONERS

Each year, from November 25 (International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women) to December 10 (International Human Rights Day), South Africa joins the global campaign for 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence (GBV). This period is a critical opportunity to reflect on the pervasive issues of violence and inequality in our communities and workplaces, and to reaffirm our commitment to fostering environments that are safe, inclusive, and supportive. For Occupational Health Practitioners (OHPs), the campaign holds particular significance.

Understanding the Role of the Workplace in Addressing GBV

The workplace is a microcosm of society and often reflects broader societal issues, including GBV. Many employees may experience violence in their homes or communities, which can spill over into their work lives. Signs of this impact might include absenteeism, reduced productivity, or emotional distress. Conversely, workplaces themselves can sometimes be sites of harassment and violence. As custodians of workplace health and well-being, OHPs are uniquely positioned to address these challenges.

Why Should OHPs Be Involved?

1. **Advocating for a Safe Workplace:** Occupational Health Practitioners are at the forefront of ensuring that workplaces uphold the highest standards of safety and respect. This involves advocating for policies that address GBV, such as harassment prevention protocols, and supporting initiatives that foster a culture of zero tolerance for violence.
2. **Providing Support to Affected Employees:** Employees experiencing GBV often need a



trusted, confidential resource. OHPs can provide or facilitate access to counseling, healthcare, and support services. By showing empathy and understanding, they can play a vital role in helping employees navigate these challenging circumstances.

3. **Raising Awareness:** As educators within the workplace, OHPs can organize workshops, distribute educational materials, and facilitate discussions that raise awareness about GBV and its impact. Awareness

initiatives during the 16 Days of Activism can contribute to breaking the stigma surrounding this issue and empowering employees to take action.

4. **Contributing to Broader Societal Change:** By addressing GBV in the workplace, OHPs contribute to a larger movement for societal transformation. Workplaces that actively combat GBV can serve as models for the community, demonstrating the importance of creating environments of mutual respect and support.

“Respect Is...”

[The 2024 theme for the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence is “Respect Is...”](#)

Taking Action During 16 Days of Activism

OHPs can engage in meaningful activities during this campaign period:

- Collaborate with HR and management to review and update workplace policies related to harassment and violence.
- Organize talks or events featuring GBV survivors or experts to share their experiences and insights.
- Partner with local NGOs or community groups to provide resources and support for employees.
- Promote helplines and emergency contacts, ensuring employees know where to turn for help.

The Path Forward

The 16 Days of Activism is not just a symbolic period; it is a catalyst for sustained action. For OHPs, it is a reminder of the critical role they play in shaping workplaces that prioritize health, dignity, and safety. By addressing GBV, Occupational Health Practitioners can make a profound impact on individual lives, workplace culture, and the broader community.

Let us all use this opportunity to take a stand against violence and work towards a South Africa where every person feels safe, respected, and valued.

HINTS TO SURVIVE THE FESTIVE SEASON:

1. **Stay Active:** Keep moving! A walk after big meals can help with digestion and keep energy levels up.
2. **Set Boundaries:** Saying "no" is okay! Be mindful of your limits to avoid burnout.
3. **Mindful Eating:** Enjoy the festive treats in moderation. Savor each bite and listen to your body.
4. **Take Breaks:** The season can get overwhelming—take time for yourself to recharge.
5. **Prioritize Sleep:** Rest is crucial for staying healthy and energized through the busy days.
6. **Stay Hydrated:** Drink plenty of water to counterbalance festive food and drink indulgences.
7. **Simplify Gift-Giving:** Focus on meaningful gifts or experiences rather than overspending or overcomplicating.
8. **Plan Ahead:** Organize meals, travel, and activities early to reduce stress.
9. **Practice Gratitude:** Focus on the positive aspects of the season and appreciate the little moments.
10. **Delegate:** Don't hesitate to ask for help in preparing meals or managing tasks—teamwork makes it

GET INVOLVED -THE IMPORTANCE OF ATTENDANCE

Are you attending regular meetings, workshops, or conferences? Is there someone that never attends a meeting, workshop, or conference? This article is about the benefits of improving your personal and professional growth by attending meetings, workshops, and conferences.

Why is Participation Important?

Research has shown that attending meetings improves your personal and professional growth. According to Idiegbeyan-soe et al., 2014, it enables the study subjects to remain up to date with latest information, acquire new skills and network with others.

Below are the benefits of attending meetings, workshops, or conferences:

- increase collaboration and networking with others.
- gain new skills and knowledge.
- sharing of own skills, knowledge, and best practices.
- learn new things from experts and policy makers.
- give input to others current ideas, including sharing own ideas.
- gain knowledge from the latest innovations, statistics and updated policies, legislation, and acts.
- participation with others on different platforms
- Updates on current issues, challenges and workable solutions and recommendations.
- Benefit from free refresher and new training.



Here are a few ways to stay or get involved:

- Take the initiative and plan your days and months ahead for meetings and workshops.
- Diarize meeting and workshop dates as important!
- Prioritize meeting dates for continuous personal and professional growth.
- Reading meeting minutes and agenda beforehand.
- Make sure you understand the meeting objectives.

Quote: "Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn"- Benjamin Franklin

Reference:

Idiegbeyan-soe, J., Osayande, O. and Michael-Onuoha, H.C. (2014) (PDF) conference/workshop attendance by librarians: Benefits, challenges, and prospects, ResearchGate. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/275966599_ConferenceWorkshop_Attendance_by_Librarians_Benefits_Challenges_and_Prospects (Accessed: 16 December 2024).

Article by Dorothy Williams



In the Spotlight

Adele is a woman of great value, always eager to serve our Occupational Health Nursing Practitioners in her role as SASOHN Office Coordinator. She truly finds joy in getting to know each of us! Her excellent communication skills make her an invaluable asset in solving problems. Adele approaches SASOHN's challenges with professionalism, ensuring every task is handled with care and attention to detail. She never settles for anything less than excellence, even when designing a certificate layout. Her passion for technology drives her to explore the latest innovations, such as the advanced AGM Digital Book—an initiative we all appreciate. Her technical proficiency with technology and software is impressive, and she has a true pleasure for incorporating Artificial Intelligence in her creative projects.

Adele recently played a key role in organizing the National SASOHN Conference in Mbombela, taking the time to search for the most beautiful trophies, which contributed to a highly professional outcome. No task is too small for her, she always ensures everything is addressed with care and dedication. Thank you for consistently going the extra mile. Adele is a master of multitasking, handling every challenge with grace and efficiency.

Annelise Breedt



Adele Dumas

SHANNON MARX'S JOURNEY IN OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH NURSING



Shannon Marx began her nursing career in 1984 as an Army nurse in training at 1 Military Hospital in Pretoria where she completed her 3-year Diploma. In 1987, she transitioned to Occupational Health at Yscor, where she spent 10 years in the casualty department, eventually becoming the team leader. In 2002, Shannon joined LMM, a private occupational health company in Vanderbijlpark. By 2020, she had founded her own company, Labour Medical Monitoring, an Occupational Health, Wellness and Travel Clinic service provider.

Shannon was inspired to pursue a career in occupational health nursing due to her deep love for people in the industry and her desire to care for hardworking individuals who provide for their families. The most rewarding aspect of her career has been the early detection of abnormalities, particularly cancers and miss diagnosed tuberculosis, and referring employees for timely medical treatment.

One of Shannon's most significant achievements was starting her own business at the age of 57 and continuing her impactful work as an occupational health nurse. A notable moment in her career was detecting cancer on an X-ray at her clinic and referring the client for treatment. The client later returned to thank her for saving his life, which was an extremely rewarding experience for her. Shannon believes that occupational health nurses (OHNs) play a crucial role in occupational health clinics, working alongside occupational medical practitioners. The clinic also boasts a valid yellow fever licence from the DOH and Travel Clinic and Shannon believed that this adds value to the clients we serve in the practice.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

Shannon faces challenges in explaining the importance and value of occupational health medical surveillance, emphasizing that it is not just an expense but a vital tool for early disease detection and employee recovery. She has learned valuable lessons in her career, such as listening to clients as fellow human beings during medical surveillance and always remaining humble and the importance of Team work. Without a good team one is nothing.

Role in SASOHN.

SASOHN has played a significant role in Shannon's professional journey. Attending SASOHN meetings has provided her with a community for professional growth, personal connections, and knowledge sharing. She also mentor's students who work in her occupational health clinic. Some of her cherished memories with SASOHN include attending regional meetings before COVID.

Extracurricular activities.

In her free time, Shannon enjoys hobbies such as stained-glass work, sewing, crocheting, and reading books. She stays connected to SASOHN by reading information sent via email and the minutes of the SASOHN Vaal meetings as well as attending the SASTM conferences on a yearly basis. (South African Society for travel medicine)

Words of wisdom

Shannon's words of wisdom to current occupational health practitioners are that life is constantly changing and nothing stays the same, and OHNs must continually improve occupational health practices. Her guiding principle, inspired by her lecturer Jenny Acutt, is to listen to clients, employees, and employers, stay up-to-date, and avoid stagnation. She advises her younger self to gain exposure to various industries. Her message to the SASOHN community is to persevere, be proud of being an occupational health nurse, and always strive for excellence.

Esmiralda Oosthuizen

ETHEL DIXON

Ethel started her training in 1962 at Entabeni Hospital. She left after two years but returned to nursing seven years later to complete general nursing and midwifery. After working a year once qualified, she started work at Drs Mundy, Booth and Carte who were all OH medical doctors. Dr Mundy encouraged Ethel to go into OH nursing. Her first company she worked at was Hart Ltd. The one aspect she enjoyed was getting to know the



workers and meeting many of the families. Way back then OH was looked upon as the Cinderella of the nursing profession or the panado and band aid brigade. It was extremely rewarding to see OH grow from there. During her time at Harts, she felt that some of the companies were content to just have a nurse on site. She was trying to introduce a hearing conservation program just before leaving Harts.

One lesson she learnt in the earlier days was that management had little idea what to expect so seemed happy with a half-hearted service. As OH developed so did their expectations.

Whilst working at Everite the clinic received many sick notes stating the diagnosis as Asbestosis. Ethel and the company doctor decided to invite the medical school, hospital doctors and doctors in private practice to a presentation on their health program discussing some of the x-rays. The union wanted to audit the clinic but after two visits decided they were satisfied, and the clinic went on to score one of the highest in the companies in other countries.

Ethel worked for AECI clinic from 2003 until she reached retirement age. She continued as a fixed term contractor until she reached the age of seventy-two when she developed health problems. She was a valuable team member and left an enormous impact on her colleagues and clients over the years.

Ethel was a member of the KZN coastal region, previously Port Natal for many years. She served as treasurer and Chairperson for the group and participated in planning a few national conferences. She collaborated with Bev vd Berg (Botha) to write an article on driver medicals for SASOHN and was honored to be awarded Honorary Life membership.

Ethel mentored many students over the years and was a big advocate for encouraging the OH Nurses to join SASOHN.

Ethel completed her B tech degree in 1998.

Ethel's family have always played an important role in Ethel's life, she was widowed a few years back. After two hijackings and an armed home invasion Ethel relocated to Ficksburg to join her daughter Jackie and family where she is enjoying her retirement. She has a daughter Debbie who lives in Durban and two granddaughters, one who is following her footsteps and has just graduated as a Registered nurse.

Ethel's advice to new OHNP's is to never be afraid to ask questions and be the best that you can. She also suggests giving back to the profession which she did for so many years as a SASOHN committee member.



**OHNPS AND OTHER TEAM MEMBERS
AT SAFRIPOL RECEIVE TEAM AWARD
AT COMPANIES EXCELLENCE AWARDS
2024 FOR BIGGEST LOSER
COMPETITION 2023**

In a remarkable achievement, the OHNPs (Sr EV Oosthuizen and Sr N Akburally) together with other team members at Safripol have been honored with the prestigious Team Award at the Companies Excellence Awards 2024. This accolade was awarded in recognition of their outstanding performance in the Biggest Loser Competition (wellness campaign), a testament to their dedication, teamwork, and commitment to excellence.

The Companies Excellence Awards are a renowned reward and recognition system designed to celebrate exceptional achievements within the corporate sector. The Team Award specifically acknowledges the performance of a team in achieving specific business objectives. It highlights teams that deliver beyond expectations, demonstrate a unified commitment, and show exceptional dedication to joint problem-solving.

The OHNP together with the biggest loser team at Safripol stood out among their peers by not only meeting but also exceeding the competition's rigorous standards. Their success in the Biggest Loser Competition is a reflection of their hard work, strategic planning, and cohesive teamwork. This award is a testament to their ability to work together towards a common goal, overcoming challenges and achieving remarkable results.

The Biggest Loser Competition, a key event in the Companies Excellence Awards, challenges teams to innovate and excel in various business aspects. The OHNP's and other team members' victory in this competition underscores their ability to think creatively, solve problems efficiently, and maintain a strong team spirit.

Receiving this award is a significant milestone for the OHNPs and other team members at Safripol as a whole. It not only recognizes their current achievements but also sets a high standard for future endeavors. The team's success serves as an inspiration to other teams within the company, encouraging a culture of excellence and continuous improvement.

In conclusion, the OHNPs and other team members recognition at the Companies Excellence Awards is a proud moment for Safripol. It highlights the importance of teamwork, dedication, and a unified approach to achieving business objectives. Congratulations to the OHNPs and other team members for their well-deserved success!



UNDERSTANDING THE IMPORTANCE OF WRITTEN INFORMED CONSENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

Have you ever wondered why there's such a strong emphasis on getting written informed consent from your patients? Simply put, having written evidence can significantly protect you in any legal dispute or malpractice claim.

In South Africa, patient consent is a cornerstone of medical practice. Legally, medical professionals must obtain signed consent from their patients, ensuring patients have all the information they need to make informed decisions about their care. This is a crucial part of respecting patient autonomy and rights.

Why is Written Informed Consent Crucial?

Obtaining written informed consent is essential for both ethical and legal reasons. It safeguards both the patient and the healthcare professional. Additionally, written consent provides tangible documentation that is invaluable, particularly for medical malpractice insurance.

Key Points About Patient Consent in South Africa

Legal Framework: The National Health Act of 2003 and guidelines from the South African Medical Association (SAMA) detail the requirements for obtaining informed consent, ensuring that medical professionals meet the necessary standards.

Informed Consent: This process involves providing patients with all relevant information about their treatment, including the nature of the procedure, potential risks and benefits, alternatives, and consequences of refusing treatment.

Consent Form: A consent form, signed by the patient or their legal guardian, confirms that the patient agrees to the treatment and understands the associated risks. For minors or incapacitated persons, their legal guardian or next of kin completes the form.

Capacity to Consent: As a medical professional, it's your responsibility to assess the patient's capacity to consent. This means ensuring they understand the information provided and can make informed decisions. If a patient lacks this capacity, consent must be obtained from a legal guardian or next of kin.

Documenting the Consent Process: Thorough documentation of the consent process is required. This includes detailing the information provided to the patient, discussions held, and the patient's agreement or refusal. This record ensures transparency and accountability in medical practice.

FAQs on the Consent Process

Does the healthcare professional need to document the verbal explanation given to the patient? Yes, documenting the verbal explanation is crucial. This documentation should include specific details of the information provided, discussions held, and the patient's agreement or refusal. It's an essential part of ensuring patients are fully informed.

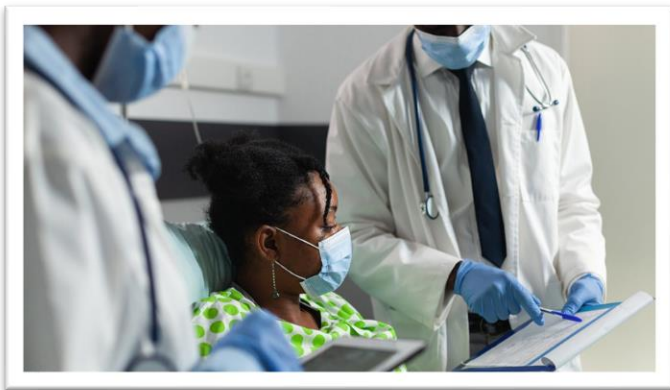
What information should be included in the verbal explanation to the patient? The explanation should cover the nature and purpose of the treatment, potential risks and benefits, alternative options, and expected outcomes. It should be communicated in a way that the patient can understand.

What if a patient cannot provide informed consent? If a patient lacks the capacity to consent, you need to obtain consent from a legally authorized representative, such as a legal guardian or next of kin. This involves explaining the treatment to the representative and ensuring they understand before obtaining their consent on behalf of the patient.

How should the documentation of the consent process be maintained? Maintain detailed and comprehensive records of the consent process. This includes the information provided, discussions held, patient questions, and the patient's or representative's agreement or refusal. Ensure this documentation is stored securely in compliance with South African regulations and guidelines.

Understanding and adhering to these guidelines not only ensures ethical medical practice but also provides legal protection and reinforces the trust between you and your patients.

Lauren Anderson



DEPRESSION



Depressive disorder (also known as depression) is a common mental disorder. It involves a depressed mood or loss of pleasure or interest in activities for long periods of time. A person in any community can be easily depressed due to a combination of factors including widespread poverty, high levels of inequality, exposure to violence, unemployment, lack of access to healthcare, social stigma around mental health, substance abuse, historical trauma, lack of social support and the ongoing challenges of living in a developing country, which can all contribute to feelings of hopelessness and despair. Depression

results from a complex interaction of social, psychological, and biological factors. People who have gone through adverse life events (unemployment, bereavement, traumatic events) are more likely to develop depression. Depression can, in turn, lead to more stress and dysfunction and worsen the affected person's life situation and the depression itself.

Depression is closely related to and affected by physical health. Many of the factors that influence depression (such as physical inactivity or harmful use of alcohol) are also known risk factors for diseases such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes and respiratory diseases. In turn, people with these diseases may also find themselves experiencing depression due to the difficulties associated with managing their condition.

During the festive or any holidays people are easily faced with the challenges because of the pressure from individual's surrounding within the community who practices their faith which comes with a lot of challenges and demands which heavily effects on an individual's surrounding them thus they develop unhealthy pressure which demands them to behave in a certain way in order for an individual to cope and preserve dignity, and failure to that it creates an enormous pressure which forces an affected individual to behave in a certain way.

Prevention programmes have been shown to reduce depression. Effective community approaches to prevent depression include school-based programmes to enhance a pattern of positive coping in children and adolescents. Interventions for parents of children with behavioural problems may reduce parental depressive symptoms and improve outcomes for their children, so if you have concerns and or noticing you are presenting with challenges of inability to cope with tasks, please contact your healthcare provider immediately. Exercise programmes for older people can also be effective in depression prevention.

“Be wise and be sharp, festive season is a depressed mood that often does not require a push to be activated- stay alert and positive in life”

Article by Gladile PX

TAKING ACTION AGAINST WORKPLACE BULLYING: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

In South Africa, employees who experience workplace bullying have several options to address the situation, considering the relevant legislation:

Internal Procedures

1. **Report** the incident: Inform a supervisor, HR representative, or a trusted manager about the bullying behavior.
2. **Follow company policies:** Familiarize yourself with the company's policies and procedures for addressing workplace bullying.

Labour Legislation

1. **Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) 85 of 1993:** Section 2 of the OHSA requires employers to provide a safe working environment, including protection from psychological hazards like bullying.
2. **Employment Equity Act (EEA) 55 of 1998:** Section 6 of the EEA prohibits unfair discrimination, including harassment and bullying.
3. **Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA) 75 of 1997:** Section 2 of the BCEA requires employers to provide a safe and healthy work environment.

Remember, employees have the right to work in a safe and healthy environment, free from bullying and harassment.



External Support

1. **Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA):** Employees can lodge a complaint with the CCMA for unfair labor practices, including workplace bullying.

2. **South African Police Service (SAPS):** In cases of severe bullying or harassment, employees can report the incident to the SAPS.
3. **Professional counseling services:** Employees can seek support from professional counselors or psychologists to cope with the emotional impact of workplace bullying.

Additional Resources

1. **South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG):** A mental health organization that provides support and resources for individuals experiencing workplace bullying.
2. **The Labour Department:** Employees can contact the Labour Department for guidance on addressing workplace bullying and filing complaints.

VITAMIN B12 DEFICIENCY AND METFORMIN: A GROWING CONCERN

Metformin is one of the most prescribed medications for type 2 diabetes, primarily used to regulate blood sugar levels. While it effectively helps manage diabetes, recent research has highlighted a potential side effect: vitamin B12 deficiency. This deficiency can lead to significant health concerns, including nerve damage and anemia. This article explores the relationship between metformin use and vitamin B12 levels, examining the underlying mechanisms and potential implications for patients.

Mechanisms Behind Vitamin B12 Deficiency

Vitamin B12 plays a crucial role in the production of red blood cells, the functioning of the nervous system, and DNA synthesis. Metformin has been shown to impair the absorption of vitamin B12 in the gastrointestinal tract, particularly in the small intestine. It is believed that metformin interferes with the motility and function of the small bowel, which could contribute to reduced vitamin B12 absorption. Additionally, metformin may increase the secretion of certain gut hormones, which could further affect vitamin B12 uptake.

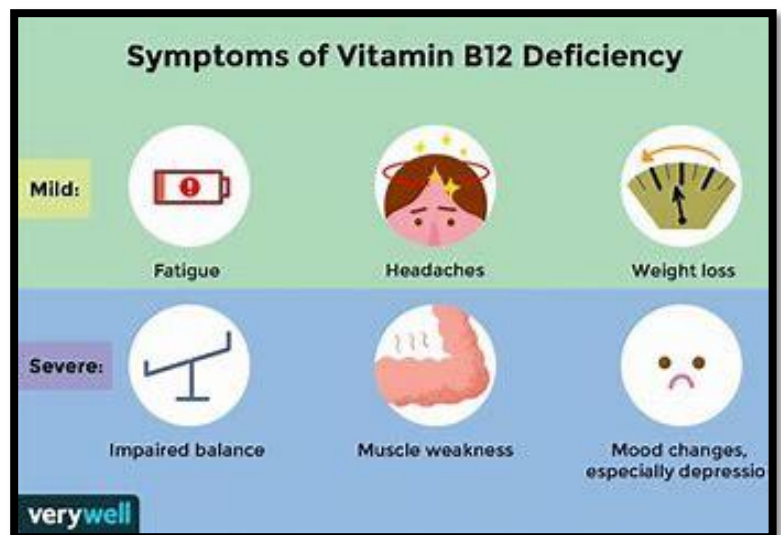
Prevalence and Impact

Research suggests that vitamin B12 deficiency is more common among long-term metformin users. A study published in *Diabetes Care* found that approximately 10-30% of individuals on long-term metformin therapy exhibit lower levels of vitamin B12, with the risk increasing with duration of use. The deficiency can manifest in a range of symptoms, including fatigue, weakness, numbness, and tingling sensations in the hands and feet, and in severe cases, neurological impairment or cognitive decline.

A study by Fatima et al. (2016) also observed that patients on metformin for more than four years had a higher incidence of vitamin B12 deficiency compared to those on alternative therapies. This highlights the importance of monitoring vitamin B12 levels in patients who have been on metformin for extended periods.

Monitoring and Management

Given the risk of vitamin B12 deficiency, it is essential for healthcare providers to regularly monitor the vitamin B12 levels of patients on long-term metformin therapy. This can be done through routine blood tests, particularly for those who have been using metformin for several years.



If a deficiency is detected, vitamin B12 supplementation can help prevent or reverse the symptoms. Oral B12 supplements are often recommended, although in more severe cases, intramuscular injections of B12 may be necessary. Additionally, dietary modifications, such as increasing the intake of B12-rich foods (e.g., meat, fish, dairy, and fortified cereals), can further support vitamin B12 levels.

Conclusion

While metformin remains a cornerstone of diabetes management, healthcare professionals should be aware of the potential risk of vitamin B12 deficiency in patients using this medication for extended periods. Regular monitoring and early intervention are key to preventing the complications associated with B12 deficiency. As the understanding of metformin's side effects continues to evolve, it is crucial to balance the benefits of blood sugar control with the risks associated with long-term use.

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1. Fatima, S., et al. (2016). *Vitamin B12 deficiency in metformin-treated diabetic patients: A prospective study*. *Diabetes & Metabolism Journal*, 40(1), 52-58.
2. Bauman, W. A., Shaw, S., & Spungen, A. M. (2000). *Increased intake of vitamin B12 from food or supplements in metformin-treated patients with type 2 diabetes*. *Diabetes Care*, 23(10), 1612-1615.
3. Alharbi, T. G., et al. (2021). *Vitamin B12 deficiency in patients with type 2 diabetes taking metformin: A systematic review and meta-analysis*. *Diabetes Research and Clinical Practice*, 173, 108640.

Save
the
Date



CONFERENCE – EMBEDDED ROOTS = ABUNDANT FRUITS

The highly anticipated SASOHN National Conference and Annual General Meeting (AGM) took place from November 20 to 22, 2024, at the picturesque ANEW Resort in White River, Mpumalanga. Themed “*Embedded Roots = Abundant Fruits*,” the event was a celebration of the deep roots that sustain and nourish the occupational health nursing community, resulting in abundant growth with shared knowledge, networking opportunities, and celebration of achievements within the field of occupational health nursing.

A Warm Welcome and a Vibrant Start

The conference commenced on Wednesday with three pre-conference workshops, providing attendees with practical tools and insights to enhance their practice. The evening saw delegates gather for a lively cocktail event themed “*Traditional Roots*,” encouraging attendees to embrace their heritage by dressing in elegant Shweshwe attire. The evening entertainment featured a fun-filled bingo game, fostering camaraderie and laughter among colleagues.

Day Two: Inspiration, Knowledge, and Glamour

Thursday was a full conference day packed with dynamic speakers who shared cutting-edge knowledge and insights into occupational health. Delegates left sessions inspired and equipped with innovative strategies to enhance their professional impact.

The day concluded with a formal gala event and awards ceremony, always the highlight of the conference. Attendees dressed to impress, celebrating the achievements and awards to the outstanding SASOHN members. In addition to the awards the newly elected office bearers were announced for the next term. National President – Joan Visser, National Ed Rep - Khanyoh Zuma, Treasure - Mercia Patience and Melanie Pillay as Secretary. We congratulate the newly elected office bearers and extend our best wishes, along with our unwavering support throughout the upcoming term.

Entertainment for the evening was provided by the sensational *Dancing Queens of White River*, who captivated the audience with their *Mia Mamma* performance originally created as an event to raise funds for the local Hospice reaching their target amount raised of R100 000.00. The combination of celebration and entertainment created an unforgettable evening of joy and connection.

The Final Day and Farewell

On Friday, the AGM was held, providing members the opportunity to review the year's achievements, discuss future plans, and engage in strategic planning for the organization. Following the AGM, delegates enjoyed packed lunches before departing for their respective homes, leaving the resort with renewed energy and a shared vision for the future.

A Conference to Remember

The 2024 SASOHN National Conference and AGM was a resounding success that the Mpumalanga region can be proud of, reflecting the theme's essence: the power of deep roots to produce abundant fruits. Attendees returned to their roles reinvigorated, equipped with fresh knowledge, and strengthened by the bonds of a vibrant professional community.

We look forward to next year's conference as we continue to grow and thrive together!



SASOHN **Conference 2024**



WEST RAND: REGIONAL COIDA WORKSHOP REPORT

Overview

The focus of the workshop was to address the issues on different facets of COIDA presented by various speakers from the DoEL

The 1st speaker highlighted the amendments to the Act and how it impacts the applicant & employer. Addressed the rationale behind the legislative changes to better suite the rapidly advancing workplace at large.

The 2nd presenter focused on the re-opening of Claims. The process to be followed, the forms and requirement thereof from the treating doctor and applicant/patient.

The next speaker deliberated on a few alternative programmes offered by the Department (DoEL) to the employees who are deemed incapacitated because of their injuries on duty/occupational diseases.

There were many other burning issues from the floor that necessitated additional sessions with COIDA. Due to time constraints the workshop had to be concluded

Compiled by: Lebohang Molefe



NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL MANAGEMENT

1. **Improve Communication**
Prioritize open and honest communication with your team. Regular check-ins and feedback will foster trust and clarity.
2. **Delegate More**
Empower your team by trusting them with tasks. This builds confidence and boosts productivity.
3. **Focus on Work-Life Balance**
Balance your work and personal life. A healthy balance leads to improved focus and team morale.
4. **Set Clear Goals**
Establish specific, measurable goals to keep your team on track and aligned with the company's objectives.
5. **Enhance Emotional Intelligence**
Strengthen empathy, self-awareness, and conflict resolution skills to build stronger relationships with your team.
6. **Encourage Learning**
Promote continuous learning through training and development to keep your team sharp and motivated.
7. **Celebrate Success**
Acknowledge and celebrate achievements to motivate your team and create a positive work environment.

SASOHN WESTERN CAPE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY REPORT: DONATION TO ANIMAL CRUELTY LEAGUE, EPPING



During November the SASOHN Western Cape region proudly participated in a social responsibility initiative to support the Animal Cruelty League (ACL) in Epping. This donation aimed to express appreciation for the hard work and dedication of the ACL staff in caring for animals in need.

SASOHN Western Cape generously contributed pet food, blankets, and appreciation gifts to the workers at the ACL. These donations are part of the ongoing efforts by SASOHN to give back to the community and support causes that align with compassion and care. The ACL staff were deeply grateful for the gesture, which acknowledged their vital role in protecting and rehabilitating animals.

This initiative reflects SASOHN's commitment to social responsibility and its ongoing efforts to support local organizations making a positive impact in the community.

SASOHN WESTERN CAPE HLM APPRECIATION LUNCH

SASOHN Western Cape recently hosted a special lunch in honor of our five esteemed Honorary Life Members (HLMs). The event was a heartfelt opportunity to celebrate and appreciate the invaluable contributions of these members, who have served SASOHN with dedication and passion throughout their terms of office.

The lunch brought together all five HLMs, providing a chance to reflect on their years of service, the impact they've had on the organization, and the legacy they leave behind. Each HLM has played a crucial role in shaping SASOHN into the thriving community it is today, and their commitment to advancing occupational health and nursing has been inspiring.

SASOHN Western Cape extends its sincere gratitude to these remarkable individuals for their unwavering support and service. Their dedication has not only strengthened the organization but has also made a lasting difference in the occupational health field.

We are truly grateful for their leadership, and we look forward to continuing to build upon the foundations they have helped lay for the future of SASOHN



Photo 1: In Front row. Eppies Volschenk (93); Theresa Bosman. Back Row: Joan Visser; Annie Tattersall (81); Dalene Lorimer

SASOHN KZN COASTAL

Regional Workshop

KZN Coastal hosted a face-to-face Workshop on 13th of August at UKZN Campus, Thanks to Sr Jali for hosting us. Theme Document Management in an Occupational Setting. We had 6 exhibitors and 3 speakers that covered ISO 9001 Quality system, formulating a procedure and document management. 24 members attended from coastal and inland regions.



Winners of lucky draws by Exhibitors - **SASOHN KZN**

Social Responsibility

We continued to support the Ekhanana Old age home in the Umlazi area as social responsibility project, and we identified the need for diapers. A sincere thanks to SASOHN KZN Coastal members and sponsors who met the challenge and made it possible to fulfill our social responsibility for Ekhanana Old age Home, Umlazi. The handover was done on the 6th of September and had a tour of the facility and met residents.



SASOHN CONFERENCE AWARDS RECEIVED

Congratulations to our regional members who received award at the SASOHN Annual Conference at Gala Dinner

Jabu Hlophe for completing her master's in public health - she graduated in September and received Ian Webster award

Khanyoh Zuma received the President's Award, Honary Life Membership and Re-elected as National Education Rep.





Books for you to enjoy

Here are some notable books and resources on occupational health, particularly relevant to South Africa, that could make excellent reads:

1. **"Occupational Health: A Practical Guide for Managers"** by Nicola Good and others - This book focuses on practical approaches for managing occupational health services, with insights applicable to resource-constrained settings like South Africa. It emphasizes workplace safety and health policy development.
2. **"Occupational Health Barriers in South Africa: A Call for Ubuntu"** - Published in the *Annals of Global Health*, this work discusses the systemic challenges faced by occupational health practitioners in South Africa and advocates for the integration of the Ubuntu philosophy into health interventions [UPSpace](#)
3. **Occupational Health and Safety Act No. 85 of 1993 and Regulations** (Revised Edition) - This updated resource includes essential legal guidelines and practical applications for occupational health and safety in South African workplaces. It is invaluable for ensuring compliance and understanding legislative requirements. [Sherwood Books](#)
4. **"Pathology and Intervention in Musculoskeletal Rehabilitation" (2nd Edition)** - While not exclusively focused on occupational health, this book addresses key aspects of workplace ergonomics and rehabilitation, offering critical insights for practitioners handling work-related musculoskeletal disorders [Sherwood Books](#)
5. **"Occupational Health and Hygiene in the Workplace"** by South African experts - A resource that provides localized strategies for addressing workplace health hazards, especially in high-risk industries.



Occupational Health & Safety

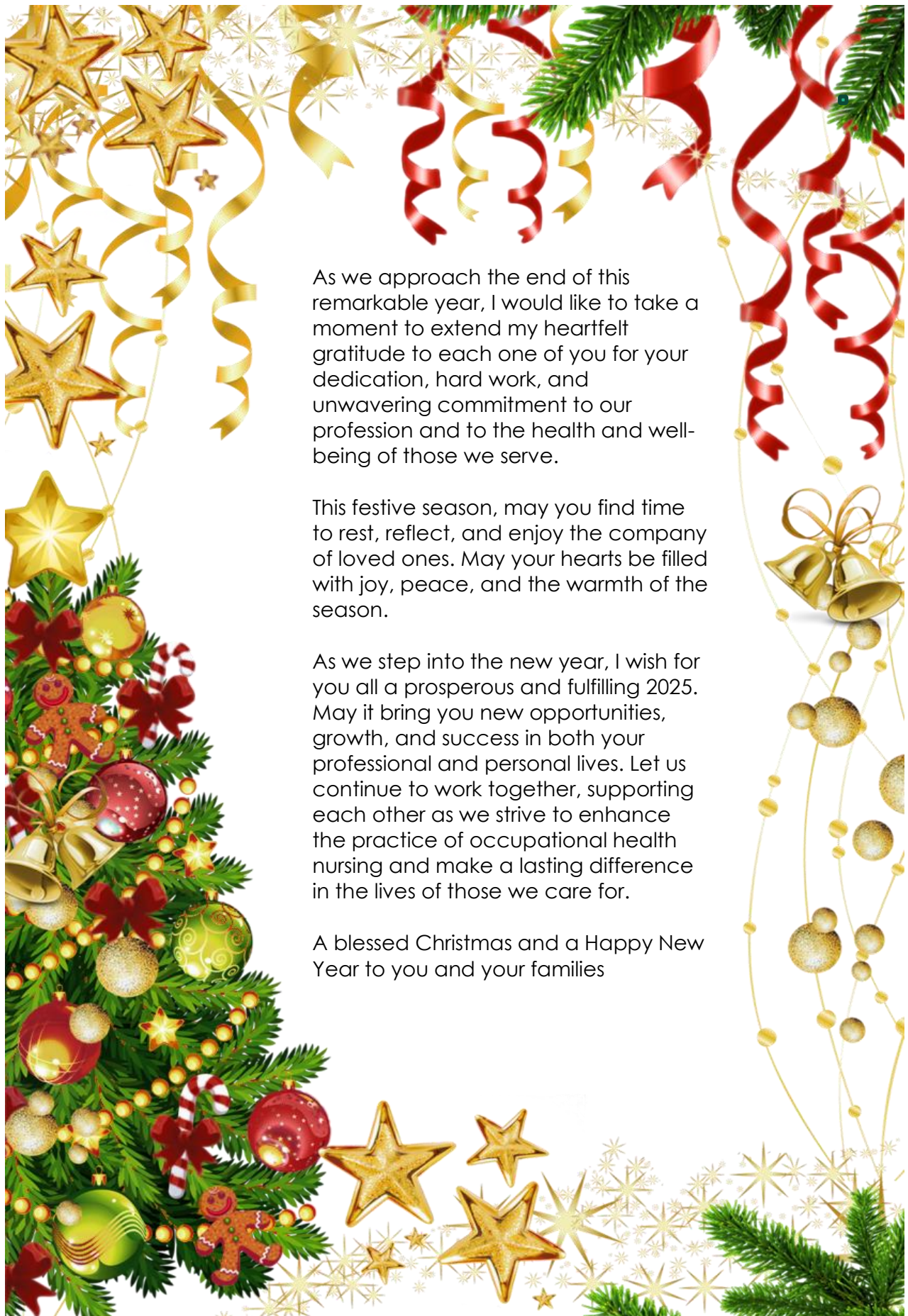
Act No. 85 of 1993 and Regulations
Revised 24th Edition



The essential OHS reference – updated regulations and guidance for a safer workplace.

This key text establishes an advisory council, providing for the health and safety of employees, protecting the public from workplace hazards, and assisting organizations in ensuring legislative compliance and safe working conditions. No occupational health and safety professional or employer should be without this vital reference containing the most up-to-date regulations and guidance.

The recently updated Occupational Health and Safety Act No. 85 of 1993 is now conveniently available as an e-book or portable A5 hard copy, incorporating the latest amendments and regulations to aid compliance. This essential publication includes revised Asbestos Abatement Regulations, new Commercial Diving Regulations, and a Code of Practice for inshore diving operations. It incorporates the amended notice on implementing key Hazardous Chemical Agents Regulations of 2021.



As we approach the end of this remarkable year, I would like to take a moment to extend my heartfelt gratitude to each one of you for your dedication, hard work, and unwavering commitment to our profession and to the health and well-being of those we serve.

This festive season, may you find time to rest, reflect, and enjoy the company of loved ones. May your hearts be filled with joy, peace, and the warmth of the season.

As we step into the new year, I wish for you all a prosperous and fulfilling 2025. May it bring you new opportunities, growth, and success in both your professional and personal lives. Let us continue to work together, supporting each other as we strive to enhance the practice of occupational health nursing and make a lasting difference in the lives of those we care for.

A blessed Christmas and a Happy New Year to you and your families