The 11th Annual Congress and AGM were held from 2 – 4 May 2008 at Orion Safari Lodge in Rustenburg, a venue in a picturesque setting at the entrance to the Rustenburg Kloof. Not even the unexpected long weekend and threat of inclement weather stood in the way of 46 delegates and their families, as well as a fair number of day delegates, coming out in full support to attend. Diligent planning and preparation especially by our secretaries and past president laid the ground for a hugely successful congress, certainly ranking among the top value-add congresses for a unique interest group.

The academic programme was outstanding and boasted several experts in their field of activity. A brief summary of presentations follows:

• Occupational lung disease is a natural part of our lives and was further elaborated on by Dr Dave Clark talking about the Thibela TB study, Prof Jill Murray on the review of the TB audit tool (MHSC launch) and “Reaching Ex-Miners with Occupational Lung Disease” by Dr Fazel Randera.

• A wide range of topics were presented, of interest to both the mine medical fraternity and general clinicians and allied professionals, such as Occupational Vibration Exposure by Gerrie Pienaar (occupational hygienist), Psychological and Cognitive Aspects of Fitness to Work on a Mine by Fransa Owens (occupational therapist), Medical Radiation by Dr Don Emby (radiologist) and Impact of HIV on Clinical Presentation by Dr Kevin Ho (specialist physician).

• The Regulation of Health and Safety in South Africa compared with the rest of the world was discussed by Dr Olga Masekoa from the Department of Minerals and Energy (DME) and Dr M Dlamini talked on What Mine Medical Officers offer Workers. Drs Marina Botha and Rashaad Hansia presented a proposed Occupational Health Accreditation tool developed by SASOM and the MMOA.

• As usual, there was strong support from the Mine Health and Safety Committee with several launches: The Occupational Hygiene Handbook by Dr David Stanton, Outcome of Year 2 of the Silicosis Elimination Program Phase 2 by Kobus Dekker and Abednego Baker and Ergonomics by Schue Schutte.

• Dr Don Emby once again presented some interesting X-ray quiz-competitions – a most humbling experience!

Presentations were concise and to the point, indeed not only educational but providing food for thought and equipping delegates to avoid future pitfalls. These will shortly be available on the new look website currently undergoing construction www.mmoa.org.za – We wish to sincerely thank our sponsors, who assisted in the success and who had interesting display tables and materials: Ciplamed, Healthshare and Imperial Bank.

After the busy one-and-a-half day congress, members attended the AGM. Highlights from the past year were presented from the annual report and new office bearers were elected.

President: Dr DB De Villiers
Vice President: Dr V Govender
Past President: Dr MR Hansia
Dr Kevin Ho
Dr D Emby
Dr N Mtshali
Dr TJ Pieterse
Dr F Randera
Dr A Banyini
Dr BL Ndelu
Dr L Dizingwa
Prof J Murray
Prof M Ross
Dr A Begley
Dr JH Raath – Co opted

Issues to be prioritised in the next year are continued growth, a possible review of the lengthy name of the association and rescheduling of the date for the congress in order not to distract from the attendance of ICOH 2009. There was overwhelming support to still continue with a congress in 2009, as it serves a unique purpose and networking opportunity not catered for by the larger national and international congresses – essentially serving mining medical professionals.

The afternoon was continued with well-deserved rest (the weather tailor-made), serious rugby watching and socialising, leading up to a most enjoyable gala dinner evening with the magic entertainment of Trevor Duffy, who made all sorts of things disappear, re-appear and converted some youngsters into seriously considering the noble profession of magic!

All-in-all a memorable occasion for the association – shall we see you there next year?