On 4 May 2019, The Mine Medical Professionals Association (MMPA) hosted the Incapacity and Permanent Impairment Symposium at the magnificent Emperors Palace. The event was well attended; medical practitioners from the mining industry and beyond came to deliberate on this sensitive but important topic that affects them on a daily basis.

WHO WAS IN ATTENDANCE?
In attendance were participants from various disciplines. We had occupational medical practitioners (OMPs), occupational health practitioners (OHPs), occupational therapists (OTs), legal experts, the Rand Mutual Assurance (RMA) team, the Workmen’s Compensation Fund team, the Department of Mineral Resources (DMR) team, and medical practitioners in mining.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE EVENT
In the first session, experts took an interesting look at the Symposium topic from the perspective of an occupational therapist engaging with the Compensation Fund.

A presentation by the legal expert from RMA was another highlight of the Symposium. Mr Mavhungu Ramurunzi gave us a clear understanding of a work-related injury. His presentation was interactive and gave us food for thought as he provided examples from case studies. When assessing an accident in terms of the Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act (COIDA), we need to ascertain if it arises out of, and in the course of, an employee’s employment. As the mining industry evolves, the OMP is subject to higher demands and pressures. The session on fitness to work aimed to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the OMP when it comes to fitness to work assessments. The OMPs were empowered with tools to use in their day-to-day assessments when deciding on fitness to work.

The speakers were meticulous when delivering their presentations and we gained a lot from each topic.

INSIGHTS FROM THE SYMPOSIUM
Incapacity and disability are challenging issues that OHPs frequently face. They have to make difficult decisions regarding employees’ fitness to work that may impact their ability to continue providing for their families. The consensus among the delegates was that this was a very fruitful symposium and that we need to have more similar events. The MMPA is growing and we hope that this momentum will continue to attract OHPs from all industries.

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Dr Dipalesa Mokoboto and Dr Vusimuzi Nhlapho
Photograph: Dian Schutte

Dr Luvuyo Dzingwa, RMA Medical Manager, discussing disability and permanent impairment from a compensation perspective
Photograph: Dian Schutte