The SASOHN Conference 2022, with the theme Four Seasons, will be hosted by the Western Cape Region at the Blaauwberg Beach Hotel in Cape Town. The academic content will consist of three pre-conference workshops and the conference day of eight presentations.

The pre-conference workshops are as follows: ‘Weather the storm’: equipping the occupational health nurse practitioner (OHNP) with basic ergonomic skills. The workshop will be presented by Dale Kennedy of Ergomax and aims to re-visit the ergonomics regulations and any changes thereto. Further, it aims to incorporate these changes into practice to comply with the Regulations and ensure a working environment that considers the potential impact of ergonomics; and seeks measures to prevent and address ergonomic inconsistencies in the workplace.

The ‘El nino’ workshop, presented by Henk Blignaut, will explore the mental health of the OHNP through promotion of self-care and self-caring practices. The impact of the Pandemic is ongoing, and it is important to promote sound self-care practices amongst all healthcare workers. This interactive workshop will include activities regarding personality typing, ways to deal with work stressors, and responses to stress and burnout.

The ‘Winds of change’ workshop seeks to look beyond COVID-19. The workshop will be presented by Benjamin de Waal and will include information about statistical predictors of COVID-19 waves, vaccination protocols and schedules, chronic effects of COVID-19, and the way forward.

The conference presentations will be facilitated in three sessions. Session One will comprise three presentations. Justin Malherbe, Senior Associate at Webber Wentzel, will provide insight into the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA) and its implications for the OHNP. The implementation of the Act has had far-reaching consequences for individuals and organisations alike; understanding the intent of the Act, as well as compliance with it, is imperative. Dr Zahiday Sonday will share expertise relating to the management of hazardous biological agents (HBAs) in the workplace. Risk assessment for HBAs will be included in the presentation, as the knowledge gained during the Pandemic about HBAs should not be put aside, nor should the protocols adopted during this time be rejected in their entirety. Tanya Bothma, a bilateral lung transplant recipient, will share her journey from childhood to the time of surgery and beyond. This poignant and brutally honest window into a life lived with chronic illness is sure to both educate and inspire. Tanya will also touch on how her illness has impacted her ability to work, which will prompt the delegates to think about accommodation in the workplace.

Session Two will include a review of case studies by Ernst van Biljon, a Director at Legal Compliance Services. The case studies aim to illustrate the need for organisations and OHNPs alike to ensure that legal compliance is ongoing and that measures to enforce compliance are implemented. Dr Greg Kew, an occupational medicine specialist, will talk about screening for substance abuse. The policies and procedures that should accompany the screening, as well as legislative requirements, will be included in the discussion. The session will close with a presentation on cultural diversity – a topic requested by the members of the Western Cape region on many occasions. The awareness of cultural diversity in the context of the workplace, and specifically in the rendering of an occupational health service, will be the addressed by Siyabulela Sabata.

Session Three will consist of matters relating to toxic workplaces and the different personality types within the work environment. Delegates can expect to be both enlightened and empowered by the information shared by the session presenter, Anwar van der Schyff. Dr Frank Magwegwe will close the day by sharing his extensive knowledge of resilience, arguably a concept that is defined differently by many but, without a doubt, is required in the specialisation of occupational health.

It is anticipated that an exciting time of learning and networking, intermingled with moments of relaxation and refreshments, await those who attend this conference. To register for the conference, please visit the SASOHN website at www.sasohn.co.za and follow the relevant links.