

# SASOHN's 41st Conference and AGM: *Four Seasons*

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## Overview

The South African Society of Occupational Health Nursing Practitioners (SASOHN) celebrated the return of its Annual Conference to the beautiful city of Cape Town in 2022. The venue, the Blaauwberg Beach Hotel, with breath-taking views over Table Mountain and Table Bay, revealed the city's iconic status to the delegates. The event was hosted by the SASOHN Western Cape Region and took place from 23 to 25 November 2022.

The conference theme was *Four Seasons* – celebrating the notorious Cape Town weather where one can experience four seasons in one day! The aim was to address various topics, as identified from member polls and requests to entertain, enlighten, and educate the delegates. The conference further afforded delegates the opportunity to network with fellow occupational health nursing practitioners (OHNPs), visit exhibitor stands, and attend the cocktail and gala dinner events, and the annual general meeting (AGM).

## Conference presentations

The pre-conference workshops presented on Wednesday 23 November 2022 were well attended. Conference delegates had a difficult choice in selecting one of three possible workshops to attend. 'Fundamental principles of ergonomics' was presented by Dale Kennedy – an acclaimed ergonomist who was part of the steering committee that developed the 2019 Ergonomics Regulations, and therefore a knowledgeable presenter of this workshop. The second workshop, 'Mental health, self-care and self-caring', was facilitated by Henk Blignaut, an industrial psychologist who specialises in employee wellness. The workshop delegates gained insights into their personal mental health as well as the health of their occupational health clients. The third workshop, 'Beyond COVID', was presented by Benjamin de Waal, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Emergency Medical Sciences, Cape Peninsula University of Technology. Mr de Waal holds an MSc in Medical Sciences (Clinical Epidemiology) degree from the University of Stellenbosch. He was well suited to equip the attendees with tools to manage the COVID pandemic; he also shared information on lessons learned during the Pandemic and how to prepare for the next 'Big One'.

Conference day proceedings on Thursday, 24 November 2022 opened with a warm seasonal welcome by the SASOHN Western Cape Regional Chairperson, Joan Visser, followed by a welcome address by our SASOHN President, Michelle Bester.

The first session of the day, *Summer*, was chaired by weather forecaster, Yolande Jooste, and began with a presentation by Justin Malherbe, a senior attorney specialising in insurance and health law. He focused on the Protection of Personal Information (POPI) Act and how it applies in healthcare and beyond. A key message was that, in healthcare, the importance of proper record keeping, informed consent, and right to privacy can never be overstated.

This was followed by an insightful session lead by Dr Zahida Sondag, an occupational medical practitioner who works for the Assurance Directorate, Western Cape Department of Health. She addressed the Regulations pertaining to Hazardous Biological Agents, promulgated in March 2022. The topic of discussion included an introduction to what a hazardous biological agent is, the types of hazardous biological agents, and how they reproduce and affect

workers. This was followed by an overview of the new Hazardous Biological Agents Regulations, and the changes that were made, including new definitions of a biohazard, a 'competent person', 'control measures', and 'decontamination'. Information was shared on both standard and universal precautions, classification of hazardous biological agents, employers' and employees' duties, and medical surveillance and record keeping requirements. Of relevance to the delegates was guidance on how to conduct a risk assessment for hazardous biological agents.

The third presentation of the day was a motivational talk by Tanya Bothma, who shared the inspiring story of her journey through debilitating chronic illness, the death of her brother (which included the agonising decision that the family had to make regarding organ donation), followed, shortly thereafter, by her double lung transplant. She shared her experience of how organ donation affected her and her family, from the perspectives of both donor and recipient. Her presentation was moving and thought-provoking and many tears were shed over the 'paradox of life'.

During the tea break that followed the first session, attendees had the opportunity to visit the many exhibitors' stands to learn about their various products and services.

The second session of the day, *Autumn*, introduced Ernst van Biljon, a lawyer who obtained his BProc degree from the Rand Afrikaans University in 1985. Mr Van Biljon travelled from George to discuss 'Legislative compliance: exploring case studies'. His key experience was gained when he joined the Department of Justice as a public prosecutor at the Roodepoort Magistrates Court. His career progressed through promotion to the Specialists Court where he prosecuted wrongdoers of occupational health and safety offences. He focused on selected case studies as they applied to occupational health, followed by a mock-trial, which was much enjoyed by the delegates. The lecture and demonstration left the attendees with much-needed insight into the consequences of not adhering to the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

The fifth presentation of the day was facilitated by Dr Greg Kew: 'To screen or not to screen: substances of abuse'. Dr Kew is a nationally known figure in occupational medicine and has vast experience in occupational health, including substance abuse and testing. His presentation incorporated details of the High Court decision to decriminalise private use of cannabis, which led to a revolution in substance-abuse testing. The presentation included steps to implementing a workplace substance-abuse programme, typical procedural scenarios generally linked to substance abuse, important concepts for substance-abuse programmes, testing, testing equipment, and cross-reactivity. He included information on the importance of laboratory testing (confirmatory testing) after a non-negative result and how it aids in the fair and legal discipline of an employee, if he or she is found to have used substances of abuse. Additional discussion included the selection of test kits and information on the difference between urine testing and oral fluid testing. His presentation continued with the difference between being 'under the influence' and 'over the limit', the reasons for testing, how to deal with non-compliance, and who can legally conduct the testing. In conclusion, he discussed court cases that applied to substance-abuse testing.



The third session of the day, *Winter*, began with 'Cultural diversity: implications for the workplace', presented by Siyabulela Sabata, a teaching and learning specialist in the Academic Planning Unit of the University of the Western Cape. Mr Sabata holds a Master's degree in Education from the University of Cape Town. He focused on why cultural diversity is important in the health profession, cultivating relational gaze for nurse specialists in occupational health, re-imagining cultural diversity through Ubuntu, implications for the field of nursing education, implications for the nursing profession, and the use of Ubuntu as African philo-praxis for liberation. His passion for the topic was evident and the presentation was very informative.

Dr Frank Magwegwe, who holds a PhD in Personal Financial Planning from Kansas State University, provided the closing presentation on resilience. Dr Magwegwe has extensive corporate experience with a cumulative 22 years in the financial services industry. Prior to joining the Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS) in 2021, he held several leadership positions. Dr Magwegwe is founder and Managing Director of Thrive Financial Wellness, a company that develops and delivers evidence-based employee financial education and wellness solutions, based on behaviour change science. He shared a brief history of where he started his career, which was selling fruit in the streets of Johannesburg when he left school. His presentation included a colourful explanation of stressors and coping with them, using resources available to the individual. He shared research that identified links between chronic stress and a wide range of health problems, presenting a graph showing the link between stress and the depression continuum. He talked about the effects of stress on decision making and productivity, and how to become resilient despite stress.

### Gala dinner and awards ceremony

The gala dinner event, with the theme *Spring*, was made possible by sponsorship from Amtronix. The night saw the delegates in flamboyant dress against the backdrop of the ocean and the city lights. Dr Terence Hermanus, a personal branding specialist, was the master

of ceremonies for the event. The bestowing of the awards for the exceptional achievers of the occupational health nursing profession was interspersed with information pertaining to personal branding.

The award recipients were:

OHNP of the Year: Melanie Pillay

Region of the Year: KZN Inland Region

Honorary Life Member: Joan Visser

### Conclusion

The conference exceeded everyone's expectations and the Western Cape Region Committee can pride themselves on a successful and enjoyable event. The committee wishes to thank all the delegates, presenters, exhibitors and volunteers who helped to make this event great!

Special mention goes to the exhibitors, without which the conference would not have been possible:

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