

News from the SASOM National Office

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SASOM Annual Congress 2023: a virtual event in four sessions

Following the success and good attendance at the Annual Congress in 2022, which was held in a fully digital format in four sessions across four months, the 2023 Annual Congress of the South African Society of Occupational Medicine (SASOM) was held in the same format. The theme was *Occupational health practice in 2023: shining a light on the shadows of medicine*, and comprised four sessions on the last Friday of the months of June, July, August, and September 2023. Each session was CPD-accredited for four CEUnits by the South African Medical Association (SAMA).

The sub-themes and presentations are listed below, per individual session:

Session 1, 30 June 2023: Good practice for occupational health medical practitioners (OHMPs)

- Ass. Prof. Jason Kai Wei Lee (National University of Singapore, and Chair of the International Commission on Occupational Health (ICOH) Scientific Committee on Thermal Factors) – ‘Workers in a warming world: more than just heat injuries and productivity losses’
- Prof. Johan du Plessis (North-West University (NWU), and Southern African Institute for Occupational Hygiene (SAIOH)) – ‘Additive manufacturing/3D-printing’: an emerging occupational health concern or not?’
- Michelle Bester (Tshwane University of Technology (TUT), South African Society of Occupational Health Nursing Practitioners (SASOHN), and Secretary of the ICOH Scientific Committee on Education and Training in Occupational Health) – ‘The role of primary healthcare (PHC) in occupational health: primary identification, initial management and referral’
- Prof. Emeritus Carel Hulshof (University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands, and Secretary of the ICOH Scientific Committee on Effectiveness in Occupational Health Services) – ‘The ‘haves and have-nots’: lessons from occupational health services in corporates, small- and medium-scale enterprises, and what about the informal sector?’

Session 2, 28 July 2023: Updates in legislation, compensation, and ethics in occupational health

- Dr Jan Lapere (Occupational Health Legal Advisor, and SASOM ExCo) – ‘Legal accountabilities of the occupational service provider: wading through the changes in ethical rules for medical records and how these are impacted by the POPI Act’
- Elsabé Klinck (Managing Director: Elsabé Klinck and Associates, Johannesburg, South Africa) – ‘Compensation and ethics of occupational diseases and return to work policies and strategies: the role of the DoEL and COIDA and how gaps can be addressed’
- Warren Mallon (Specialist: Occupational Hygiene and Health (Physical Stressors and OH AIAs), Department of Employment and Labour, South Africa) – ‘Interrogating the updated regulations in South Africa’
- Dr Tshogofatso Mabelane (Allergologist: ‘About Allergy’, South Africa) – ‘Occupational asthma and allergic contact dermatitis: a practical approach to managing two common occupational diseases’

Session 3, 25 August 2023: Emerging issues and hot topics in occupational health and medicine

- Dr Veruscka Leso (University of Naples Federico II, Naples, Italy, and Secretary of the ICOH Scientific Committee on Toxicology of Metals) – ‘Fast facts on nanotechnology: implications for occupational health and safety’
- Dr Amparo Benavent (OSH Unit of Healthcare, Regional Ministry of Valencia, Spain) – ‘Nursing and hazardous drugs: a gender-based approach to the conditions and consequences of their use’
- Prof. Carolyn Marie Audet (Department of Health Policy and the Institute for Global Health, Vanderbilt University Medical Center, USA) and Dr Ryan Wagner (School of Public Health, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa, and Senior Research Fellow, South African Medical Research Council/Wits Agincourt Research Unit) – ‘Identifying and mitigating occupational health risks among traditional healers: an individually randomised controlled trial to improve personal protective equipment use among traditional healers in South Africa’

- Dr Max Lum (National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), USA) – ‘Algorithms, artificial intelligence, machine learning and the future of work’

Session 4, 29 September 2023: Ergonomics and psychosocial factors in the workplace

- Prof. Stavroula Leka (Universities of Lancaster and Nottingham, UK, ICOH Board member, Past Chair of the ICOH Scientific Committee on Work Organisation and Psychosocial Factors) – ‘Psychosocial risk management and the promotion of health, safety and wellbeing in the future of work: guidance for occupational health medical practitioners (OHMPs)’
- Lyndsey Swart (Occupational Therapist: University of Pretoria, Occupational Therapy Association of South Africa (OTASA), Occupational Therapy in Occupational Health (OTOH), South

Africa) – ‘The Ergonomics Regulations and occupational health: synergising ergonomics risk assessment, medical surveillance and functional assessment of worker fitness’

- Dr Deepak Sharan (Consultant in Orthopaedic Surgery and Rehabilitation, Bangalore, India, and Chair of the ICOH Scientific Committee on Musculoskeletal Disorders) – ‘New digital tools in the assessment and management of work-related musculoskeletal disorders’
- Claudina Nogueira (ICOH Vice President for Scientific Committees, and SASOM ExCo) – ‘Update on the ICOH2024 Congress’

Statistics, regarding participants for all sessions (a total of 391), are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Registrations, participants (391), and countries represented at the four sessions of the SASOM Annual Congress 2023

No. registrations	No. participants (attendance rate)	Countries represented by participants and presenters
<i>Session 1, 30 June 2023 – Good practice for occupational health medical practitioners (OHMPs)</i>		
161	100 (62%)	Botswana (3), Democratic Republic of the Congo (1), Eswatini (1), Lesotho (1), Mozambique (1), Namibia (5), Singapore (1 presenter), South Africa (85, including 2 presenters), The Netherlands (1 presenter), United States (1)
<i>Session 2, 28 July 2023 – Updates in legislation, compensation, and ethics in occupational health</i>		
166	110 (66%)	Angola (1), Botswana (4), Eswatini (2), Mozambique (1), Namibia (8), South Africa (94, including 4 presenters)
<i>Session 3, 25 August 2023 – Emerging issues and hot topics in occupational health and medicine</i>		
151	106 (71%)	Botswana (4), Eswatini (2), Italy (1 presenter), Mozambique (2), Namibia (4), South Africa (89, including 1 presenter), Spain (1 presenter), United States (2 presenters), Zambia (1)
<i>Session 4, 29 September 2023 – Ergonomics and psychosocial factors in the workplace</i>		
99	75 (76%)	Botswana (2), Eswatini (2), India (1 presenter), Mozambique (1), Namibia (2), South Africa (64, including 2 presenters), The Netherlands (1), United Kingdom (1 presenter), Zambia (1)



SASOM
South African Society
of Occupational Medicine
FOUNDED IN 1948

Accredited
cpd

SASOM ANNUAL CONGRESS

Friday, 30 June | Friday, 28 July | Friday, 25 August | Friday, 29 September

All sessions (13h00 to 17h00 SAST) – Virtual/Digital Platform

“Occupational Health Practice in 2023 – Shining a light on the shadows of Medicine”

<p>30 June 2023</p> <p>Session 1: “Good practice for Occupational Health Medical Practitioners (OHMPs)”</p> <p>13h00 - 17h00</p>	<p>28 July 2023</p> <p>Session 2: “Updates in Legislation, Compensation and Ethics in Occupational Health”</p> <p>13h00 - 17h00</p>	<p>25 August 2023</p> <p>Session 3: “Emerging issues and hot topics in Occupational Health and Medicine”</p> <p>13h00 - 17h00</p>	<p>29 September 2023</p> <p>Session 4: “Ergonomics and Psychosocial Factors in the Workplace”</p> <p>13h00 - 17h00</p>
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Collaboration between PHASA and SASOM: re-imagining occupational health training

On 10 September, the Public Health Association of South Africa's (PHASA's) Occupational and Environmental Health (OEH) Special Interest Group (SIG), in partnership with SASOM, hosted a hybrid workshop titled 'Bridging the gap between academia and the workplace: re-imagining occupational health training – preparedness of the occupational medicine provider to enter the working world'. The workshop was facilitated by Dr Blanche Andrews (Stellenbosch University) and formed part of the programme of the annual PHASA conference, which was held at the Boardwalk Convention Centre, Gqeberha (Port Elizabeth), from 10 to 13 September 2023.

The 2023 conference theme was *Transforming research translation: re-imagining public health evidence, policies, and practice*. The workshop aimed to explore innovations for re-invigorating occupational medicine training in South Africa and bridging the gap between training and practice to ensure that graduates are equipped with skills relevant to the working population they serve. It further aimed to stimulate a discussion around innovative ideas to 'future-proof' occupational medicine training in South Africa. The workshop commenced with an introduction to set the scene, followed by a panel presentation by national and international occupational medicine experts directly involved in occupational medicine training. The workshop ended with a facilitated discussion and consensus on future actions.

The introduction highlighted the strategic importance of South African occupational medicine training to the African continent. South Africa is strategically positioned as it is the only southern African country that offers formal occupational medicine training, locally and to the rest of southern Africa. Training programmes allow two streams of qualification: a master's degree in occupational medicine (research-based or practical MMed specialist training) or a Postgraduate Diploma in Occupational Health/Medicine (PG Dip OH/OM).

The panel session commenced with a presentation by Ass. Prof. Shahieda Adams, occupational medicine specialist at Groote Schuur Hospital and the Division of Occupational Medicine, University of Cape Town. She is also Chair of the Division of Occupational Medicine in the College of Public Health Medicine, The Colleges of Medicine of South Africa (CMSA), for the triennium ending October 2023. Prof. Adams outlined the current South African specialist training landscape, highlighting the move to workplace-based assessments and entrustable professional activities. She noted that training challenges included resource constraints, limited training platforms, and practical training exposures (including the private sector). The presentation questioned the efficient use of technology in occupational medicine specialist training, including the 'Internet of Things' and artificial intelligence (AI).

Dr Fiona Kevitt, the National Specialty Director for the Faculty of Occupational Medicine (FOM), Royal College of Physicians of Ireland (RCPI), and the Clinical Lead for the RCPI/FOM Outcomes-based Education Curriculum Revision Project, presented the Irish training experience. Key caveats from her presentation included the emphasis on practical exposure through placements in various work environments within the training programme, and the move toward an outcomes-based education model. Dr Gordon Haire, a

recently qualified occupational medicine specialist, shared his experience of moving from Ireland to Australia and applying his skills in a new environment. He noted that his training allowed him to comfortably use his skills in various contexts, including practising in a different country. He stressed the importance of mentorship and support for all new trainees, regardless of which country/jurisdiction they may have been trained in.

Dr Lanre Ogunyemi, the Immediate Past Chief Examiner for the Faculty of Occupational Medicine (FOM), United Kingdom (UK), Regional Speciality Adviser in occupational medicine for the Trent Region, and Deputy Chief Examiner for the Faculty of Occupational Medicine (FOM), Royal College of Physicians, Ireland, presented the UK perspective. Occupational medicine trainees in the UK can follow a formal or informal route to specialisation. The formal route involves a structured four-year programme. The key components of the 2022 revision of the occupational medicine curriculum were outlined. Learning outcomes included areas related to professionalism, research, clinical practice, workplace risk, worker safety, education and training, and leadership.

Dr Frederick Weinand, an occupational medicine specialist in the Ministry of Health, Tanzania, with international training completed in the UK and South Africa, presented the PG Dip OH/OM training. He compared the traditional in-person modular training structures to a hybrid approach to training, incorporating distance learning. Benefits of a hybrid training approach include continuous training and online support for the course duration, access to a diverse pool of lecturers, as the constraints associated with travelling and busy schedules are mitigated, and ring-fencing contact time for practical worksite visits and training. Dr Weinand presented future recommendations for the PG Dip OH/OM training, including agreed-upon learning competencies across diploma programmes for greater standardisation, centralised training and assessment through the CMSA, and collaboration across universities, including curriculum review. He also emphasised the need for international collaboration and an Occupational Medicine Centre of Excellence. He envisioned that this Centre of Excellence would accommodate South African and regional African training needs, establish a mentorship programme, and clearly delineate the scope of practice of occupational health nurse practitioners, occupational medicine practitioners, and occupational medicine specialists.

The introduction and panel presentation were insightful and thought provoking, and laid the foundation for a robust discussion. Due to time constraints, it was agreed by those in attendance that further stakeholder engagement was required to comprehensively plan for the future of occupational medicine training and practice in South Africa and the broader geographic region. A consolidated position statement incorporating the aims and consensus of the workshop was seen as a stepping-stone to begin the process of re-imagining and innovating the training of occupational medicine service providers.

A common, shared vision and unified action are needed. To quote an African proverb, "If you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go far, go together". The innovative transformation of occupational medicine training will require all relevant stakeholders, including but not limited to academia, industry, and graduates, to collaborate in charting a way forward.

The Public Health Association of South Africa Occupational and Environmental Health Special Interest Group (PHASA OEH SIG) welcomes further comment on this topic:

- Dr Blanche Andrews, Division of Health Systems and Public Health, Stellenbosch University, e-mail: bandrews@sun.ac.za
- Dr Sujatha Hariparsad, Discipline of Occupational and Environmental Health, School of Nursing and Public Health, University of KwaZulu-Natal, e-mail: HariparsadS1@ukzn.ac.za
- Dr Itumeleng Ntatamala, Occupational Medicine Division, School of Public Health, University of Cape Town, e-mail: itumeleng.ntatamala@uct.ac.za

SASOM Western Cape Chapter webinar

The SASOM Western Cape Chapter organised a webinar on AI in healthcare on 10 October 2023, hosted by the SASOM National Office on its Zoom platform. Two presentations were delivered in the webinar:

- Ass. Prof. Mark Sujan (Chartered Ergonomist and Human Factors Specialist, University of Warwick, UK) – ‘Deploying AI in healthcare environments: lessons learnt’
- Dr Muzzammil Ismail (Public Health Medicine Specialist, Western Cape Department of Health, South Africa) – ‘AI-enabled occupational and public health: an important chat’

SASOM ExCo and Annual General Meetings – November 2023

SASOM held its last ExCo meeting of the year on 13 November 2023, fully virtually. Its annual general meeting (AGM) took place on 17 November 2023, as an associated meeting of the 7th International Conference on the History of Occupational and Environmental Health (organised by the ICOH Scientific Committee on History of Prevention of Occupational and Environmental Diseases), held in Durban, South Africa, from 15 to 17 November

2023. SASOM was represented on the organising committee of the conference, and members chaired sessions and delivered oral and poster presentations. SASOM took the opportunity to market ICOH at the conference and promote the benefits for occupational health practitioners in becoming ICOH members. To this end, SASOM designed a flyer with ICOH information for conference attendees, and hardcopies of ICOH membership forms were available for those interested in applying for ICOH membership. Feedback on the AGM and the history conference will be published in the SASOM newsletter of the first issue of *Occupational Health Southern Africa*, 2024.

Season’s greetings

SASOM takes the opportunity of the festive season spirit to congratulate the Executive Director of the National Institute for Occupational Health (NIOH) in Johannesburg on being awarded an adjunct professorship by the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa. Congratulations and many celebrations, Prof. Spo Kgalamono – Chair of Occupational Health, SASOM ExCo member, and long-time friend! SASOM is very proud of your academic achievements and valuable contributions to occupational health over many years!

The SASOM National Office will close for the end-of-year festive season on 14 December 2023, and re-open on 8 January 2024.


‘Tis the season to be not only merry, but also grateful, mindful, hopeful, and reflective of the past year. SASOM wishes all its members, their families and friends, and their communities a peaceful, healthy, and safe festive season, filled with many blessings. May 2024 bring us all peace of mind, kind hearts, contented spirits, and many successes and rewards in all facets of life. SASOM will continue supporting its members in ‘all-things-occupational-health-and-medicine’ and is pleased to continue supporting *Occupational Health Southern Africa*, which it considers to be a rich regional resource in occupational health. 



Image: courtesy of SASOM