

MMPA Symposium

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BACKGROUND

On 14 March 2026, the Mine Medical Professionals Association (MMPA) held its continuing professional development (CPD) accredited Symposium at the Fairway Hotel in Johannesburg. The Symposium was focused on capacitating healthcare professionals in the mining industry with the latest legislation changes, case study learnings, and approaches to challenging scenarios. The Symposium is held twice a year to ensure that healthcare professionals are kept abreast of new leading practices.

INTRODUCTION

The Symposium focuses on topical issues that have been raised in various occupational health dialogues, subcommittees, and workshops throughout the year. The focus this year was on addressing the recurring challenges that professionals in the mining space experienced.

PROGRAMME OF THE DAY

The Symposium was opened by the Vice-President of the MMPA, Dr Angel Ndlovu. The Programme Director was Dr Fezile Gabellah. There were 83 delegates in attendance.

Dr Thabiso Mofokeng, an ophthalmologist in private practice, was the first speaker and he spoke about the importance of preventing monocular vision, or “one eye disease” as he called it, and emphasised that control, monitoring, and early detection can spare an employee from losing vision. He presented several case studies and highlighted the importance of using indirect ophthalmoscopic examinations when examining employees. He also shared tools that healthcare workers can use to screen for vision and explained how

to differentiate between gross and fine depth perception. It was clear that another session is needed to discuss further the various tools, which proved to be helpful.

Dr Brenda Khubeka-Chauke, a physician with a special interest in ethics, gave a talk on the importance of being aware of serving two masters (employer and employee), and of maintaining a strong sense of morality in advocating for employees. She highlighted the challenges that healthcare workers face and the conundrum they may experience, emphasising the importance of remaining steadfast in one’s convictions to do the “right thing”. Dr Khubeka-Chauke highlighted that, in as much as ethics may not be rule-bound, one needs to uphold the oath to not do, or contribute to, harm to the patient. A point of reflection for the attendees was to consider their confidence in being resuscitated if they collapsed at their own places of work. Attendees were asked to be cognisant of the adequacy of resources for the employees that they and other healthcare workers serve.

Dr Pravesh Lakha, a senior occupational medicine practitioner (OMP) from Harmony Gold Mining Company, presented on heat-related illnesses. He differentiated between illnesses due to heat exposure and those that may be aggravated by heat but are not directly due to heat exposure, such as influenza. He shared the medical investigations required, history-taking, and the importance of comprehensively interviewing the patient to understand the causative mechanism. He also spoke about the importance of conducting a detailed section 11.5 investigation to ensure the safety of all employees working underground. Dr Lakha explained the process of re-integrating the employee back at work by conducting heat tolerance stress testing to assess if they are acclimatised to, or intolerant of, heat.



Dr Fezile Gabellah welcoming attendees to the Symposium
Photograph: Nqobile Nkosi



Dr Miranda Moloto handing over a gift of gratitude to **Dr Lucas Mosidi**
Photograph: Nqobile Nkosi



Dr Dankiso Mkwanazi presenting on work-related upper limb disorders Photograph: Nqobile Nkosi

The attendees' interests were piqued by new colleagues joining the industry, including those working in the coal mining industry.

Dr Dankiso Mkwanazi, an OMP, ergonomics risk assessor, and exposure scientist based in private practice, and Dr Lucas Mosidi, a claims manager at Rand Mutual Assurance (RMA), shared an enlightening presentation on work-related upper limb disorders. They provided a background on the consolidation of repetitive strain injuries and how these conditions are collectively known as work-related upper limb disorders. Dr Mkwanazi spoke about history-taking, focusing on musculoskeletal examinations and the importance of submitting detailed reports that highlight any occupational association with the injury. Interestingly, he stated that, even if a claim is repudiated, one is duty-bound to substantiate and submit adequate evidence that establishes occupational tasks as the cause of the injury. Dr Mosidi reiterated this and emphasised that RMA is a social insurance – meaning they are not punitive in their processes, but look at the evidence in its totality to adjudicate claims.

Dr Miranda Moloto, Head of Rehabilitation at RMA, shared the published Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Amendment Act No. 10 of 2022 Regulations for Rehabilitation, Reintegration and Return to Work (see <https://bowmanslaw.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/2904-Bowmans-COIDA-Infographic-HR-Director-Conference-Collateral-digital.pdf> for more information).



Dr Dipalesa Mokoboto discussing the Annual Medical Report Photograph: Nqobile Nkosi

She shared copies of brochures detailing the duties of employers and healthcare providers regarding affected employees. She also shared the date of implementation, which is 1 April 2026, alerting attendees to ensure compliance.

Dr Dipalesa Mokoboto, Chief Director of Occupational Health at the Department of Mineral and Petroleum Resources, discussed the changes to the Department's 2026 Annual Medical Report template. She took the attendees through each section and explained what is required of OMPs in their reporting. There was robust discussion regarding these changes. Of note were concerns about potential duplication of information, the need for further guidance on reporting of deaths in the industry, and the practicality of measuring waist circumferences.

The session closed with an open discussion, led by Dr Gabellah, regarding a question posed by a colleague anonymously, about the duty of the OMP when the occupational hygienist fails to attend scheduled section 11.5 investigations pertaining to tuberculosis. The room was alive with discussion, and many participants emphasised that when legal compliance is not followed the general manager should be alerted, as this practice is not in accordance with the law.

The Symposium was well attended, and the feedback, engagement, and robust discussions highlighted the importance of these events. 📌