



October 2011

## **PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

In the past year, CASSA, the organisation of physicians, scientists and allied professionals dedicated to the management and study of cardiac arrhythmia has been very active and successful in pursuing its stated mission of improving the care of persons affected by arrhythmias by promoting research, education and training and providing leadership towards optimal healthcare policies.

### **Educational activities:**

As the special interest group responsible for organising the 2011 SA Heart congress, the Cardiac Arrhythmia Society and its organizing committee chaired by Andrew Thornton have been busy since the last congress in August 2010. We trust that this year's congress will meet your expectations and that it will enrich your scientific knowledge.

Apart from organising this major event, CASSA also hosted 'The Many Faces of AF' national symposium in October 2010, with three meetings in Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg, respectively. Dr Neil Sulke from Eastbourne, UK, and Prof Johannes Brachmann from Germany, were the keynote speakers during these meetings, which were attended by more than 160 cardiologists and physicians. The latest developments and guidelines in anticoagulation and new advances in ablation therapy were some of the topics on the agenda.

The success of this symposium has led to CASSA planning a similar road show on atrial fibrillation for next year. Details will be on the website from February 2012.

Other educational activities of CASSA over the past year included ECG and arrhythmia workshops for general practitioners in Johannesburg and recently in Kimberley, and an EP case presentation meeting for EP lab personnel in Cape Town. Participating and providing a session on ECGs, arrhythmias and their management in the already-existing CME calendars of the Independent Practitioners' Associations around the country has proven to be a good way of reaching out to the general practitioners and this is the route CASSA will follow in 2012.

The regular CASSA ECG quiz in the SA Heart Journal by A Okreglicki proves to be ever popular and educational.

### **Research activities:**

In its commitment to research, CASSA continues to support the South African Arrhythmogenic Right Ventricular Cardiomyopathy (ARVC) Registry based at the University of Cape Town. This registry is still young but is now one of the largest and has already made some significant contributions to the knowledge and management of ARVC.

CASSA also sponsored two post-graduate students from the Walter Sisulu University to the SA Heart congress.

Another travel grant was awarded to SASCAR to sponsor a post-graduate student to the UK/SA cardiology workshop in December 2010.

### **Accreditation:**

The number of CASSA accredited electrophysiologists has grown a little but still remains small. With the website-published list of accredited EP, CASSA provides a service to patients and their funders. The requirements for EP accreditation are being used as minimum curriculum for training locally or internationally by cardiologists interested in becoming electrophysiologists in SA.

CASSA launched its *ICD Practitioner Accreditation* in September 2011. This accreditation of non-electrophysiologist cardiologists will set standards in proficiency in ICD management which includes both implantation and follow-up. In this we have the support for training by all the cardiac arrhythmia device companies in South Africa and support in principle by the major medical aid funders. More information about this has been included in the current SA Heart Newsletter. The CASSA website provides more details regarding the need for the accreditation, guidelines for accreditation, candidates, the process and application information.

### **Leadership:**

CASSA participated actively representing SA Heart and cardiac arrhythmia interests at Council of Medical Schemes meeting on the Prescribed Minimum Benefit definition project at the end of 2010.

### **PACE:**

Our sister organisation PACE (Prevent Arrhythmic Cardiac Events) which acts as CASSA's face for patients and the public, had an equally exciting year.

This year, in addition to the normal awareness around sudden cardiac arrest and its predisposing genetic conditions, PACE also focussed on Atrial Fibrillation (AF) and the risk of stroke associated with it. During the International World Heart Rhythm Week in June, PACE targeted major media, including print, radio and television with an AF awareness campaign. Talk Radio 702, Radio Sonder Grense, SAFM and The Mail and Guardian, with a reader and listener base of more than 3 million people, were some of the broadcasters and media who took part in this campaign.

PACE also had an exhibition stand at the Comrades Marathon where approximately 5000 people were handed brochures on Sudden Cardiac Arrest and AF.

The organisation also had good exposure on the international front when their awareness project on AF and AF related stroke was chosen from more than 280 projects globally in the "1Mission 1Million" international awareness campaign.

Patient support groups continue to meet on a quarterly basis in all major metropolitan areas around South Africa and valuable information is disseminated at these meetings.

I must once again thank the CASSA corporate members for their continued support and loyalty to the organisation and its goals. They are Sanofi, Medtronic, Amayeza-Abantu, Biosense-Webster, Boehringer-Ingelheim, Boston Scientific and Biotronik.

Finally, I would like to thank my fellow EXCO members for their unselfish giving of their expertise and time to further the goals of CASSA. They are Ronnie Jardine, Andrew Thornton, Pro Obel, Anthony Stanley, Judy Daniels, Rob Scott Millar, Dave Milne, Estie Muller and our Executive Officer Franciska Rossouw.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A Okreglicki'.

A Okreglicki

President of CASSA