

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS OF SA HEART – Annual Reports 2008

CASSA

Once again I wish to thank the Executive committee for their efforts in the past year. They are the Immediate Past President Prof R Scott Millar, the elected members Ms J Daniels (Treasurer), Dr. A Okreglicki (secretary), Dr IWP Obel, Dr A Stanley, Dr A Thornton; a co-opted member Dr D Milne; and the industry members Ms H Henry and Mr. W Stranix. Ms Henry was co-opted a year ago following the resignation of the previously elected Ms L Coetzer. I would also like to introduce to you Ms Franciska du Toit who is employed now by CASSA as Executive Officer since July this year. She is from a company called Medical Society Management (MSM) headed up by George Nel who holds a similar position in some of the other Special Interest Groups of SA Heart Association.

Happily I can report that the CASSA website is now up and running at www.cassa.co.za. This has been the culmination of a long and hard slog by Prof A Okreglicki and the real breakthrough came with the employment of a new webmaster viz George Dempster of E2 Solutions, and sponsorship by Sanofi Aventis for the website. In future most of CASSA business will be transacted through the website which is very versatile in its ability to handle communications by email and SMS.

CASSA continues with its role in education namely: an annual symposium attached to the SA Heart Association annual congress, the ECG quiz in the quarterly SA Heart Journal (Prof A Okreglicki); and bi-monthly electrophysiological case discussion meetings in Gauteng (Dr A Thornton). The road show of the northern division of CASSA was completed with a successful meeting in Gaborone in February this year, and the road show of the Southern division has continued with a further 3 meetings this year. A 1-day symposium called "Sorting out Syncope" will be held in Gauteng on the 7th of March 2009 with 2 outstanding invited international speakers viz Prof Blair Grubb and Prof Adam Fitzpatrick in attendance. Medtronic held a number of workshops throughout the country on the follow-up and re-programming of ICD's which were endorsed by CASSA.

Accreditation has continued slowly which is understandable because it rests on the shoulders of 1 man (Prof R Scott Millar), but the accreditation of invasive electrophysiologists is nearly complete, and an open invitation was extended in the Newsletter of the SA Heart Association in August 2008 to all interested parties wishing to apply. A list of accredited electrophysiologists will be published on the website by the end of the year, and then we will enter a 2nd phase of accreditation viz for device implantation which is going to be a far more tricky issue.

Regrettably the Cath Lab Registry of the SA Heart Association (now known as SHARE for South-african Heart Association Registry) has stalled for a number of reasons. One of them was the loss of interest and subsequent resignation of the software vendor. A decision is yet to be taken at the SA Heart AGM at this meeting about how best to move forward. It will be the recommendation of the SA Heart Exco to proceed with a pilot study at 2 sites, one of which will use the ACC database, and the other will use a new software developer. Either way it seems that CASSA's representative on the Cathlab registry working group viz Dr A Thornton will in fact take over the further progress of the whole project. If so, we wish him luck and resilience and hope that the problems are surmountable.

In regard to fees Dr A Stanley continues to liaise with the SA Medical Association and other players in the area and I understand that there is a more or less uniform style of billing of EP procedures throughout the country now. It is intended that CASSA will engage with major medical funders in regards to fees amongst other things, and we have had a preliminary meeting in this regard with Discovery Health on the 29th of October.

At a 2-day Bosberaad held in July this year the above issues amongst other things were discussed by Exco at length and it was resolved in addition to establish Corporate Membership formalizing financial support by industry amongst other things salary of the Executive Officer. Full corporate membership costs R30 000 per annum and Associate corporate membership R20 000 per annum. A repetitive of Associate Corporate members may not be elected onto Exco. I must acknowledge the financial support of Medtronic, Biosense-Webster and Sanofi-Aventis over the last year but it is hoped that this mechanism of Corporate Membership will expand financial support for CASSA from other players in the industry.

In conclusion it has been a privilege and honour to serve as President of this Society for the last 2 years but it has been a bit of a slow grind at issues that are not all that captivating and I hope that the next term be a more exciting one in pursuance of the very important educational role that CASSA must play in the country.

Dr Ronald M Jardine, President

HeFSSA

The past year has seen the inaugural HeFSSA Executive full fill its mandate to establish a viable independent Special Interest Group within SA Heart Association attending to the many needs of the community of medical practitioners with an interest in Heart Failure in South Africa (and Africa).

The Executive Committee elected to a 2-year term of office ending in 2008 is -

Chairperson	Prof Karen Sliwa
Secretary	Dr Eric Klug
Treasurer	Dr Olaf Forster (replaced by Dr Martin Mpe in March 2008)
Members	Dr K O'Connell Dr S Middlemost Prof J Brink Dr D Smith (co-opted 2008) Dr C Radulescu (co-opted 2008)
Industry	Mr W Stranix Mr R Moulton
Executive Officer	Mr George Nel

The Exco is proud to announce that the respective executives of **HeFSSA and the European Heart Failure Society** have approved the mutual affiliation of the two societies. This development will in future ensure mutual benefit through academic and research collaboration. HeFSSA and the European Heart Failure Society will host a joint symposium during the next European Heart Failure meeting in Nice, France (30 May – 2 June 2009) to be followed by a similar symposium during the SA Heart Congress 2009.

During July, August and September 2008, HeFSSA has embarked on a country wide workshop series focusing on **Heart Failure in Primary Care**. This program has been made possible through the support of **Pharma Dynamics**. The primary audience for these programs consists of General Practitioners, nurses and related healthcare professionals. The focus will be on recent advances in diagnostic tools and improvement of treatment strategies (non-pharmacological, pharmacological and devices). The workshops will also coincide with the introduction of the updated **Heart Failure Treatment Algorithm for South Africa** (based on the ESC guidelines).

The first workshop was held on 26th July at the Indaba Hotel in Johannesburg with Prof Karen Sliwa, Dr. Eric Klug and dietician, Sandra Pretorius as the presenters. This CPD accredited workshop was attended by 60 delegates from many sectors, including delegates from managed healthcare organizations, pharmacists, clinic sisters and general practitioners. There was excellent interaction between the audience and the speakers, particularly during the Q & A session in which Dr Eric Klug presented the audience with 8 case studies/vignettes. It was apparent that heart failure education in the primary care environment is crucial and that sessions focusing on diagnoses and recognizing symptoms of heart failure and optimizing treatment regimes are essential. Great interest was expressed in Sandra Pretorius's presentation on diet in heart failure patients. Overall, the day was seen as extremely successful and at lunch afterwards, attendees recommended and requested that HeFSSA continues to hold similar workshops in future. The 2nd workshop in this country wide series was held in Durban on the 2nd of August with Dr's Kevin O'Connell and Makoalal Makotoko as the expert lecturers. At writing this report the Cape Town meeting still needs to take place.

HeFSSA will, in keeping with the academic commitment of the society, continue to offer appropriate **training** opportunities to members.

Our 2nd annual **echocardiography course** was held on 14th and 15th March 2008 in Johannesburg and was attended by 36 delegates from across South Africa and even a delegate from Kenya. A number of Fellows were sponsored through own HeFSSA funding (flights and lodging). The delegate feedback was extremely positive with all aspects of the programme receiving a good to excellent rating. Delegates once again reinforced that these programs are needed in South Africa. Our thanks goes to Dr. Shirley Middlemost (chairperson), Dr. Darryl Smith and Dr. Cristina Radulescu for their extensive preparation and excellent lectures.

As always the **HeFSSA website** (www.hefssa.org) has regularly been updated through the year, and a featured aspect highlighting living with heart failure introduced in 2007 was continued in 2008.

HeFSSA is the principal SA Heart Special Interest Group responsible for organising the **2009 SA Heart Congress**. A number of meetings have taken place and the planning is well advanced. This is a major undertaking and we are great full for those members whom are part of the Organising Committee (Prof's K Sliwa as chair, Dr's Chris Hugo-Hamman (Paed's), E Klug, K O'Connell, M Makotoko, C Radulescu and D Smith as well as G Nel with representation from CASSA, SASCI and Surgical Group).

Industry Representation has assured a close liaison facilitated by George Nel. We continue to pursue collaboration on issues of common interest, which include facilitation of educational resources expenditure, advice on applications, guidelines, etc. We remain very grateful to the industry for the financial and strategic support received.

We believe the survival of a strong Special Interest Group in heart failure is in the best interest of all stakeholders (physicians, industry vendors, health funders, hospital groups, government) and especially patients. For this reason, we appeal to all to get involved in HeFSSA and contribute towards achieving our objectives.

We aim to continue to develop our areas of influence and offer a **HELPLINE** through our Executive Officer George Nel, whereby any party can access us with enquiries, requests for assistance, lobbying etc. His direct line is 083-458-5954. These requests will be dealt with in a professional and efficient manner to provide a vital service to all.

Prof Karen Sliwa, Chairperson HeFSSA

LASSA

The Lipid and Atherosclerosis Society of Southern Africa (LASSA) remains affiliated with both the South African Heart Association (SA Heart) as a Special Interest Group (SIG) and with the Society for Endocrinology and Metabolism and Diabetes of South Africa (SEMDSA).

LASSA remains a small group with its orientation as an academic body covering a wide area of interest in inherited disorders of lipid and lipoprotein metabolism, atherosclerosis, nutrition, epidemiology and pharmacotherapy. As previously indicated, there is concern that the support for teaching and research in the fields of interest of LASSA is diminishing, especially at a time that atherosclerosis is acknowledged as one of the leading causes of morbidity and mortality in the country. Expertise in severe dyslipidaemias remains mainly at a few teaching hospitals where facilities and staff are rapidly shrinking.

The next conjoint meeting with SEMDSA is planned for 17-21 April 2009 with LASSA on 20 and 21 April. Apart from feedbacks from academic meetings and providing assistance with clinical problems, there was little other activity from LASSA. Consideration has been given to establish a more formal network of clinics in government healthcare but staff is limited and opportunity for outreach is limited as well. A one-day course on lipidology is being planned for the next meeting.

The finances of LASSA are sound as there is little demand for administration. The educational account currently holds R76 947.00. LASSA currently has R68 118.98 in a current account and R133 201.75 in a 32-day notice deposit with Standard Bank. It is anticipated that significant expenditure will be required for LASSA meetings but it is hoped that there will be no need to raise subscription costs.

The members list is attached with this email communication. It has not been altered since it was forwarded from SA Heart.

*AD Marais, Groote Schuur Hospital & University of Cape Town
FJ Raal, Johannesburg Hospital & University of Witwatersrand*

PCSSA

1. INTRODUCTION

The Paediatric Cardiac Society of South Africa (PCSSA) is a Special Interest Group of the South African Heart Association. The PCSSA is a voluntary association of paediatric cardiologists and cardiac surgeons, cardiac anaesthesiologists and paediatricians. The objectives of the Society are to improve quality of care for children with congenital and acquired heart disease through promoting research and supporting education and training of children's heart specialists. PCSSA is also the primary advocacy group for children with heart disease in South Africa.

2. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

President:	Christopher Hugo-Hamman
Vice President a Treasurer	Steven Brown
Secretary	Deliwe Ngwezi
Private Practice	Jeff Harrisberg
	John Hewitson
	Ebrahim Hoosen

3. FINANCIAL STATEMENT FOR YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2008

The Society is in a healthy financial position with reserves having increased from R 454 000 to R 552 000 in the past fiscal year. The Annual Financial Statement for year ended 31 March 2008 prepared by our Treasurer Prof S Brown, is appended.

5. PCSSA PAEDIATRIC CARDIAC SYMPOSIUM 2007

The PCSSA Paediatric Cardiac Symposium, sponsored by NETCARE, was again incorporated as part of the annual SA Heart Association Congress. We had a distinguished international faculty who spearheaded the discussions on hybrid techniques in congenital heart disease. There was also a very interesting and informative mini-symposium on the Fontan circulation. Our three guests were,

- ❖ Professor John Cheatham, Director of Cardiac Catheterization and Interventional Therapy, Nationwide Children's Hospital, Columbus, Ohio, USA
- ❖ Professor Mark Galantowicz, Chief Cardiothoracic Surgeon, also from Nationwide Children's Hospital
- ❖ Professor Marc Gewillig, Professor of Paediatric and Congenital Heart Disease, University of Leuven, Belgium

In the free paper sessions there were a record 26 local speakers who delivered a total of 29 presentations. These were a mix of case reports and scientific papers. We awarded prizes for the best case report and for the best scientific paper. Best scientific paper was "Alcapa: From Critical to Cured" by Dr Liezl Zuhlke, University of Cape Town and Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital. The Best case presentation was "Is This the Elusive Congenital Coronary Artery Aneurysm?" by Dr Peter Shere Ramoroko, Medforum Hospital and the Medical University of South Africa

Dr Jeff Harrisberg was the Convenor and organiser of the paediatric programme and our representative on the organising committee. PCSSA has been offered a profit share of R 100 000 or 6.5% of the profits generated from this Congress.

6. PCSSA PAEDIATRIC CARDIAC SYMPOSIUM 2008

Our annual symposium, now sponsored by Mediclinic, takes place at the 9th annual South African Heart Association Congress in 5 November 2008. Convenors Liezl Zühlke and Andre Brooks, members of the organising committee, have an excellent international faculty with a very attractive programme particularly relevant to the burden of paediatric heart disease in Africa.

International Speakers include;

- Prof Daniel Sidi, Head of Paediatric Cardiology at Hospital Necker in Paris,
- Prof Pascal Vouhé, Head of Paediatric Cardiothoracic surgery at Hospital Necker Paris
- David Barron Consultant surgeon Birmingham Children's Hospital, UK and
- Sara Thorne Consultant GUCH cardiologist Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Birmingham, UK

The Executive Committee has again decided to offer two prizes for outstanding work presented at the Symposium; A Research Fellowship valued at R10 000.00 and A prize of R5 000.00 will be given for the best presentation at the symposium.

7. SOUTH AFRICAN HEART ASSOCIATION CONGRESS 2009

Planning has started for the 2009 Congress to be held at Sun City from 22-25 October 2009. The joint organisers are the Heart Failure Society of South Africa and PCSSA. Christopher Hugo-Hamman has been on the organising committee. The convenors of the 2009 Paediatric Cardiac Symposium are John Hewitson and Jeff Harrisberg.

8. 2007 AUDIT OF PAEDIATRIC CARDIAC SERVICES IN SOUTH AFRICA

In 2007 PCSSA funded and hosted a review of paediatric cardiac services for children in South Africa. This culminated in a workshop in the North West Province in November 2008. To help develop a vision for optimal

paediatric cardiac services, it was resolved to publish the data to advocate for service improvements through the country. The objectives of the audit are therefore,

- to highlight deficiencies within the service
- to present requirements for a viable paediatric cardiac service in the future
- To act as a reference for the developmental requirements both in terms of infrastructure and human resources within the country.

The executive committee together with representatives of each of the major units in the country is been finalizing the audit, obtaining ethical and publication. It is expected that the audit and related article will be ready for publication early in 2009. Meanwhile, the data has already proven useful in oral presentation to the Minister of Health and the Deputy Director-General in the Department of Health.

9. WORLD SUMMIT: PEDIATRIC & CONGENITAL HEART SURGERY SERVICES, EDUCATION AND CARDIAC CARE FOR CONGENITAL HEART DISEASE

John Hewitson represented the PCSSA at this meeting in Montreal Canada in June 2008 and was invited to speak on "The Status of Pediatric Cardiac Medicine in Africa". Hendrick Mamorare, also a PCSSA member spoke, on "Challenges in care for Pediatric and Congenital heart disease in Southern Africa".

10. INTERNATIONAL WORKING GROUP FOR DEFINING NOMENCLATURES FOR PAEDIATRIC AND CONGENITAL HEART DISEASE

The objectives of the group are to harmonize definitions (essentially the North American and European) of all the congenital heart defects and to match these with the ICD10 and other coding systems. Chris Hugo-Hamman was invited to join the international working group and attended the first meeting of the "Definitions Working Group" in the United States in June 2008.

11. WORLD CONGRESS OF PAEDIATRIC CARDIOLOGY AND CARDIAC SURGERY 2013

Organising Committee

Christopher Hugo-Hamman

Chairman

John Lawrenson

Chairman of the Scientific Committee

Susan Vosloo

Stuart Mackay Davidson

Treasurer (Chartered Accountant)

Liezl Zühlke

Bongani Mayosi

Representative from South African Heart Association

Andre Brooks

Peter Menelaou

Industry and Exhibition

Crystal Kasselbaum

Professional Conference Organiser

This committee is a sub-committee of the PCSSA. The focus of our work has been to establish the correct structure, to take legal opinion on the appropriate legal entity to run the Congress, to clarify our relationship with the Professional Conference Organiser (Global Conferences Africa) and to begin the onerous task of fund raising. In this regard we were thrilled that the City of Cape Town, through the Executive Mayor Helen Zille, agreed they would become a sponsor of the Congress and would support our presentation and public relations efforts at the 5th World Congress in Cairns.

12. PCSSA – WSPHCA CHILDREN'S HEART DISEASE EDUCATION PROGRAM

PCSSA launched a "Children's Heart Disease Multimedia Education Programme", partly sponsored by Abbott Pharmaceuticals. Our aim is to provide reliable and accurate multimedia and online resources for the dissemination of information on congenital and acquired heart disease in children. This web based project would initially target patients, family members and grow to meet the needs of medical and allied professionals. In this venture we will partner with the Walter Sisulu Paediatric Heart Centre for Africa in the production of materials for both paper distribution and a web page platform for use by health professionals and parents.

13. CONCLUSION

The Annual General Meeting of the PCSSA in November 2008 will mark the end of the term of the current executive committee. We thank our members for their encouragement and our friends and colleagues in the South African Heart Association for their support.

Dr Christopher Hugo-Hamman, President

SASCI

SASCI has been a very viable and active special interest group of SA Heart during the last year and I wish to report on some of the activities.

For information the Executive Committee was elected in November 2007 to serve a 2 year term:

PRESIDENT	Dr Graham Cassel
VICE PRESIDENT	Dr Farrell Hellig
IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT	
EX OFFICIO	Dr Tom Mabin
SECRETARY	Dr Adie Horak
TREASURER	Dr Clive Corbett
REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE	Dr Cobus Badenhorst - Pretoria Dr Jaques du Toit - Eastern Cape Dr Jai Patel - KwaZulu Natal Dr Mpiko Ntsekhe - Academic Sector
INDUSTRY REPRESENTATIVES (Term ending 2008)	Mr Craig Goodburn Ms Glenda Weidemann
EXECUTIVE OFFICER	Mr George Nel assisted by Ms Franciska du Toit

ACTIVITIES: 2007 culminated in the successful Heart 2 Heart Congress held at Sun City in November 2007. The meeting was co hosted by SASCI with Tom Mabin as Chairman and the surgical group hosted by Dr Robbie Kleinoog. The meeting attracted a large number of local and international faculties and a very high calibre meeting was held. The meeting was a success both from the academic and financial point of view.

LIAISON WITH INDUSTRY: In recent months the executive has been working very hard in conjunction with the medical directors of Discovery Health in an attempt to improve relationships between our Society, Discovery Health and importantly their members and our patients. With this in mind a partnership agreement has now been formalized whereby numerous aspects of healthcare including funding for cardiac equipment with stenting as a prime example being at the forefront of discussion. Going forward, no unilateral decisions will be made without input by our Executive. We have so far only met with Discovery Health as the largest funder but if this venture is successful we would endeavour to meet with other major groups in the New Year.

As President of SASCI I was invited by Discovery Health to a 2 day "Think Tank" during September to discuss the possible Government action with regard to the 2 tier system in South Africa. There had been suggestions that the then Minister of Health was keen to abolish the Private Healthcare and for this reason a "Think Tank" involving members of the private practice group of SA Heart, doctor representatives of numerous groups were invited together with both the medical and administrative heads of Discovery Health. A very successful two day meeting was held. The relevance of that discussion may depend on the policy of the new President of the country and Minister of Health. A decision will be made within the next week whether to discuss the matter at our Annual General Meeting at the end of this month or not.

CARDIAC EDUCATION: SASCI has been extremely involved in continuing medical education during the last year. A very successful registrar's workshop was held at the Panorama Hospital in February of this year **WHERE ALL** cardiologists in training from all the University Centers were invited at our expense to a weekend workshop where live cases were shown and expert lectures given. By all accounts this was a very successful endeavour and will continue on an annual basis. The next meeting will be held in Port Elizabeth on 28 February 2009. Heads of departments are invited at this time to consider sending all members of their departments to this weekend symposium.

Under sponsorship of Boston Scientific the RC Fraser Traveling Bursary annual prize will continue to be awarded to enable the recipient to travel to the United Kingdom for a 3 – 4 week period to work in a high calibre Academic Unit. The recipient of this award for this year was Dr Ashley Chin.

Once again Academic Heads are invited to consider candidates for this prestigious award. Members of the Executive will review the applications from prospective recipients and the award will be made at the next Registrar Workshop.

PARAMEDICAL SYMPOSIUM: A very successful symposium was launched and run in June 2008. This was sponsored by Medtronic South Africa held under the auspices of SASCI. Members of the SASCI Executive were invited to be part of the academic program and international speakers were also invited. The content was highly academic and the weekend enjoyed by all.

VISITING PROFESSOR PROGRAM: An annual visitor Professor Program will be launched in 2009 once again sponsored by Medtronic South Africa. This will enable us to bring a British Academic Head of Department to South Africa for a 3 month period. His time will be divided equally amongst participating Academic Units. He will be hosted at a particular University and at the discretion of the Heads of Department will be involved in student and postgraduate teaching and, if required, work in diagnostic areas such as scanning, angiography and coronary intervention.

Our Executive is very involved in academic meetings in 2009 which will include our involvement in the SA Heart Meeting to be held in November 2009 and the 5th Indian Ocean Meeting to be held in conjunction with the Reunion Cardiology Group in Mauritius from 24 – 27 November 2009. The meeting has been highly successful over the last number of years with highly respected International Faculty from France, other members of the European Union, The United States and South Africa. The meeting is held biennially once in South Africa alternating with Mauritius

PCR AND TCT: Members of SASCI have been invited to participate as part of the teaching faculty at these two prestigious International Interventional Meetings. In Barcelona 2008 a case review session was well received with presentations made by 6 different South African Cardiologists and for the 1st time live cases were transmitted from South Africa during the Learning the techniques with Jean Fajadet. Cases at that session were transmitted live from the Sunninghill Hospital in Johannesburg.

INDUSTRY REPRESENTATION: We have found active participation of industry representation on our Committee extremely useful over the last 6 years. They are not important in decision making but certainly without their funding none of our academic pursuits could take place. We have therefore allowed the Industry to elect their 2 representatives who serve for a 2 year term. I would like to place on record by extreme thanks to Craig Goodburn and Glenda Weidemann for the sterling job they have done over the last 2 years. Nominations for their successors have been received and the appointments will be made known at the Wild Coast Congress.

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION: As is known, SA Heart is a sub group of European Society of Cardiology and as of last week, SASCI is an associate of the prestigious American Society of Cardiovascular, Angiography and Intervention (SCAI). They are associated with more than 20 International Intervention Societies and have invited us to join their group. This will enable members to have access to their website which has an extremely varied amount of information and importantly member's access to their data as well as power point presentations. They run international meetings for cardiologists in training as well as international congresses and we would be invited to join those. After a lengthy meeting held recently in Washington DC members of the Executive felt that it was important to be associated with SCAI. The formalization of this association will be ratified at the Annual General Meeting at the end of the month.

I want to give my deep gratitude and thanks to our Executive Officer, George Nel who has served our organization untiringly and successfully. He has always been available to attend meetings whether they are during the week, evening or weekend and I thank him for his involvement. He is always available on his direct line 083 458 5954.

In conclusion I would like to thank the members of SASCI for giving me the opportunity to lead them for this 2 year period. I do believe that we have had a successful year to date and look forward to 2009 being an even better year. There are numerous new challenges in South Africa and the world in general. As South Africans always tend to do, we will join forces and make a success of all our endeavors.

Wishing you all a very prosperous Festive Season and a successful 2009!

DR GRAHAM CASSEL, President SASCI

Cardiac Surgical Interest Group

The past year has been an eventful one for the SIG. The SIG was involved in organizing a very successful meeting at Sun City. Together with SASCI, the Annual Congress was combined with that of the Indian Ocean Group and was held at Sun City on the 22-25th November 2008.

The Congress was well attended and we had a plethora of highly regarded international guests, delivering papers of outstanding quality. The objective of this meeting was to bring both Surgeon and Cardiologist together, on the same platform and debate those issues common to both disciplines.

The Forum was well organized, but sadly the participation was not as good, as it should have been. It has been my view for many years, that there are too many meetings held and we would actively support going back to a biennial meeting. However this has been met with resistance from our Colleagues in Cardiology on the SA Heart Executive.

Much of the blame for the lack of participation should be laid at the door of the Surgeons, who not only attended poorly, but also participated poorly. It seems almost unacceptable, that only 50% of academic Heads of Departments attend the National Meeting. On the other hand our International guests were suitably impressed, not only with the organization, but also the scientific content of the meeting and valuable international connections, have been established and since followed up.

On behalf of the Surgical Group, we have to extend out congratulations and thanks to Sue McGuinness, for the outstanding work done in organizing the meeting.

The surgical group has involved itself in the organization of the next Indian Ocean Meeting, to be held in November 2009, in Mauritius and the programme and basic organization have been arranged. I was able to attend the pilot meeting, where most of the organization was done, together with Tom Mabin in September 2008.

The SIG was also involved together with SOCTS, in holding a Stent Workshop meeting in January 2008, sponsored by Medtronic. This meeting was well attended by 30 Surgeons and those who attended and completed the Workshop, were certified in Endovascular Thoracic Aortic Stenting. This again will prove valuable for our working relationship with our Colleagues in Cardiology. A further workshop is planned for January 2009. This workshop will be open to our Colleagues in Cardiology and Vascular Surgery

Our participation in the 2008 meeting has been largely organized by Johan Brink, who is also the convener of the Organizing Committee and we look forward to attending and participating in this meeting.

THE DATA BASE: This proves to be an ongoing prickly pear, which continues to fail to come off the ground, despite the enormous work that has been put into this by Francis Smit, the Surgical Representative on the database Committee of SA Heart. Although the surgical data base has been ready since 2003 and has been accepted as part of the SA Heart database, this continues to be a project that seems to be salvaged from threatening abortion at regular intervals.

Our Society is inundated with requests for simple basic data, which unfortunately, we do not have and presently, best guesstimates are used, which at best is unacceptable. The Executive of Cardiac Surgical Group expresses once again its concern about the Cath Lab database, to which the surgical database is to be incorporated.

The SIG financial status is again a cause for concern as no funds were received from SA Heart from the Somerset Meeting, as we were deemed technically not yet accepted as a SIG, at the 2006 meeting. This was a technical point and our group were disappointed with the explanation from SA Heart Executive, but accepted their decision under duress.

As of the 2006 meeting, the financial status is at zero and presently the SIG awaits a contribution from the proceeds of the 2007 meeting, which for the first time should put it into a positive bank balance. However, at the time of writing, the financial balance of The Surgical Group, within SA Heart, remains zero.

During 2007 we were invited to accept the Journal of Cardiac Surgery as the official journal of the Society of Cardiothoracic Surgeons, which we have accepted. We have adopted the Journal as our official academic mouth piece and we have two members of the Editorial Board of that Journal. The SIG envisages participating in their journal.

We have contributed by a number of article reviews, requested by the Editor in Chief of the Journal. Members of SIG have also contributed richly to SA Heart Journal, which we endeavour to continue to do.

The SIG has not involved itself in the negotiation regarding fees and fee structure as this is done by SOCTS.

It remains for me to thank the Members of the Executive Committee and in particular Elias Zigiraides for his stern work as Secretary of the group.

Dr R. Kleinloog