1. South African Society of Cardiovascular Intervention (SASCI)

It is my privilege to report on SASCI’s activity over the past 12 months leading up to this congress.

SASCI’s role as a representative body of cardiologists, both fulltime and private in South Africa has been extended over the last few years and specifically over the last 12 months.

The Executive Committee elected to a 2-year term of office ending in 2009 is –

President Dr Graham Cassel
President (ex-officio) Dr Tom Mabin
Vice-President Dr Farrel Hellig
Secretary Dr Adie Horak
Treasurer Dr Clive Corbett
Members Dr Cobus Badenhorst, Dr Jacques du Toit, Dr Jai Patel, Dr Mpiko Ntskhe (Academic), Mr Rob Millar (Industry, term end 2010), Me Arabel Benjamin (Industry, term end 2010), Mr Roger Moult (Industry, term end 2010)
Executive Officer Mr George Nel (assisted by Me F du Toit)

RELATIONSHIP WITH MEDICAL FUNDERs: A formal Advisory Board has been set up with Discovery Health to discuss numerous aspects of patient care and procedure funding. We have met six times during the year to discuss amongst others new products such as Trans Arterial Aortic Valve replacement; introduction of Drug Eluting balloon into the South African market and the use of the MERCI device for the treatment of acute stroke. We have also been involved with pricing of different types of stents and other interventional devices.

TAVI PROGRAM: During October 2009 the first Trans femoral and trans-apical replacements were performed under proctor guidance in South Africa. SASCI was very involved in coordinating the proctor program and ensuring the smooth running of the program. The South African cardiologists and cardiac surgeons involved were chosen by the European Proctors and the European Company and not by SASCI.

SCAI AND SASCI: An association has been set up between SCAI, the American Interventional Cardiology Society and Interventional groups throughout the world. They have so far developed an association with 35 societies and SASCI is one of them. Full Fellowship has been awarded to 3 SASCI members and other SASCI members are eligible for associate or full Fellowship of SCAI. They are running an excellent Fellow Workshop for 4 days in Las Vegas, USA during December and have invited four South African Fellows to attend. The airfares are paid through SASCI’s office and the costs of the Workshop are met by SCAI. Four Fellows from four different universities in South Africa will attend.

ANNUAL FELLOWS WORKSHOP: Our Fifth Annual Fellows Workshop attended by all trainees in cardiology in South Africa was successfully held earlier this year in Port Elizabeth under the organization of Dr Jacques du Toit. The meeting was highly successful with live cases being shown and lectures given by a select faculty. It was enjoyed by all who attended. The next Fellows Workshop will be held in Cape Town at the Vincent Pallotti Hospital under the leadership of Dr AD Horak in February 2010.

VISITING PROFESSOR’S PROGRAM: We are extremely excited at the prospect of our first Visiting Professor Program during 2010. Professor Jan-Pierre Bassand from France will visit South Africa for two months during September and October, spending one month at the University of Cape Town and one month at the University of Witwatersrand, Baragwanath Hospital. During the two month period he will be involved in formal and informal training of our undergraduate and postgraduate students. The program will be coordinated by Professor Bassand and the heads of the respective departments. It is a SASCI venture sponsored by Medtronic South Africa.

ANNUAL SASCI/BOSTON SCIENTIFIC TRAVELLING GRANT: This annual award was made possible by a grant from Boston Scientific to allow a South African Fellow to visit a university in London with the idea of learning new techniques and “bringing the technology” back to his own department. The recipient of the award for 2009 was Dr Somalingum Ponnusamy from Inkosi Albert Luthuli Central Hospital.

INDIAN OCEAN MEETING: The Biennial Indian Ocean Meeting organized jointly by the Reunion Group of Cardiologists and SASCI will be held in Mauritius in November 2009. We thank Dr Tom Mabin for the untiring work he has done both in organizing the scientific and social program and we hope that a successful meeting will again be held. An excellent International local faculty has been arranged involving cardiologists from Europe, the United States and South Africa.

CATH LAB REGISTRY: We continue to work together with the Executive of SA Heart in bringing the Cath Lab Registry to all Cath Labs in South Africa. Dr Cobus Badenhorst is our representative on the Executive and hopefully 2010 will see the introduction of the Registry in most Labs in South Africa.

OBITUARY: It was with great sadness that we learnt of the untimely death of Dr Kevin O’Connell on 11 October 2009. He will be sorely missed by all and our deepest sympathy goes out to his family.

It has been my privilege to serve as President of SASCI for the last two years. The election of the new executive will take place at our Annual General Meeting at this Congress.

Dr Graham Cassel, President, SASCI
2. Heart Failure Society of South Africa (HeFSSA)

The past year has been a very busy one with HeFSSA having been tasked with hosting the annual SA Heart Congress. Apart from this all-encompassing task, the Executive Committee also ensured that continuous education on e.g. Echocardiography and Heart Failure took place around the country and kept HeFSSA well represented abroad. We would like to thank the following members of the Executive Committee who so freely and willingly gave of their time and skill to make 2009 a successful one for HeFSSA:

Chairperson Prof Karen Sliwa
Secretary Dr Eric Klug
Treasurer Dr Martin Mpe
Members Dr K O’Connell, Dr S Middlemost, Dr Pro Obel, Dr D Smith, Dr C Radulescu
Industry Mr W Stranix, Mr R Moul
Executive Officer Mr George Nel (assisted by Ms Franciska du Toit)

International Affiliation
The Exco is proud to announce that the affiliation of HeFSSA and the European Heart Failure Society has resulted in the hosting of a joint symposium during the European Heart Failure meeting in Nice, France (30 May – 2 June 2009) which will be followed by a similar symposium during the SA Heart Congress 2009. This development will in future ensure mutual benefit through academic and research collaboration

HeFSSA has had further International exposure as part of the recently established Peripartum Cardiomyopathy Working Group (PPCM) of the Heart Failure Association of the European Cardiac Society. This group had its first meeting at the congress in Nice France.

Aims of the PPCM study group
To establish a platform where the current knowledge of PPCM based on international experimental and clinical studies is summarized and regularly up-dated for example in form of consensus papers.
We will raise awareness for this rare but detrimental disease in specific awareness programs, i.e. sessions of international and national congresses, publishing articles in local journals as well as with international scientific publications. Furthermore we provide information and contact addresses on our webpage for physicians and patients.
In addition, we plan to coordinate international data collection and analysis for better understanding of the disease
We will regularly meet to discuss and optimize current management strategies of PPCM in terms of diagnostic test, novel therapy strategies, collecting data on long-term prognosis.

Study group organization
Co-Chair, Burkert Pieske (HFA member), Karen Sliwa (HeFSSA)

Members:
Uri Elkayam Zoltan Papp Sabine Pankuweit
Mark Petrie Denise Hilfiker-Kleiner Ajay Shah
Hugh Watkins Vera Regitz-Zagrosek John McMurray Luigi Tavazzi Petar Seferovic
Sabine Pankuweit Dirk van Veldhuisen

Continuous Medical Education
1. HeFSSA hosted a workshop on Echocardiography (18 April, Spier) in partnership with Corporate Member Philips. The meeting was attended by approximately 30 cardiologists and clinical technologists.
2. A specialized Echocardiography course, in association with five International MAYO speakers will be hosted on Thursday 22 October. The programme is designed for adult and paediatric cardiologists, cardiac surgeons, intensivists, anaesthetists, sonographers, physicians with an interest in echocardiography and fellows-in-training.
3. HeFSSA will also be hosting a cardiovascular update designed specially for general practitioners and physicians on Thursday 22 October, the day prior to the Annual SA Heart 2009 Congress.
   This programme will involve advice on clinical assessments of cardiac patients, interpreting ECG’s, recommendations on cardiovascular risk profiling and treatment tips on hypertension, hypercholesterolemia, coronary artery disease, arrhythmias and heart failure. Patient case studies will be used extensively.
4. Heart Failure Workshops for General Practitioners, made possible by an educational grant from Corporate Member Pharmadynamics, were held in several towns and cities across South Africa.
5. A GP specialist program is under discussion for 2010. General Practitioners will have the opportunity to sign up for a program specifically focussing on Heart Failure.

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

Participation with Funders and Regulatory Bodies
HeFSSA has published the first Chronic and Acute Heart Failure Treatment Algorithm for South Africa (based on the ESC guidelines). This algorithm was presented and discussed at the PMB Clinical Review Committee Meetings of the Council of Medical Schemes.

Prof Sliwa has been invited to participate in the Discovery Health Classification meetings.

SA Heart Congress 2009
HeFSSA is the principal SA Heart Special Interest Group responsible for organising the 2009 SA Heart Congress. Countless meetings have taken place and long hours have been spent organising this great event. This is not an easy task and we are grateful for those members who formed part of the Organising Committee (Prof’s K Sliwa as chair, Drs Jeff Harrisberg (Paed’s), E Klug, K O’Connell, M Makotoko, C Radulescu and D Smith as well as G Nel and F du Toit with representation from CASSA, SASCI and The Surgical Group).
General
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 2009.

Industry Representation has assured a close liaison facilitated by George Nel and F du Toit. 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

3. The SA Heart Surgical Group
For the Surgical Group the past year has been rewarding and disappointing in many ways…
On the positive side we were involved in the last SA Heart meeting held at the Wild Coast. Our vice chairman Prof Johan Brink was the chairman of the organizing committee and should be congratulated on organizing a fine meeting with both solid academic content and the right amount of entertainment so that a good time was had by all. It was particularly pleasing to have made contact with surgeons from other parts of Africa as well and they will once again attend this years meeting.
We will host a number of esteemed international visitors this year and all attempts have been made to tailor the content in such a way that it would be of interest to both us and our cardiological colleagues and we will participate actively in the joint sessions.
We are delighted to see that the surgical part of the SA Heart Registry has been rolled out and at the time of writing I am happy to report that the database is being installed in a number of practices. As with the cath lab registry the success of this project will depend entirely on the participation of all practitioners both public and private.
Let us not forget the efforts of all those involved to make this a success and we are indebted to Prof Francis Smit for all his input in the original design.

Our group have now held two TEVAR workshops the last one in January of this year where all those who attended were certificated at the end of a two day course under the guidance and leadership of international visitors. We are grateful to Medtronic for facilitating Dr Klein’s visit from the Netherlands. There has been a logarithmic increase in surgical involvement in this technology.
On a more disappointing note we were forced to get involved in negotiations regarding fees and disbursements with the funding industry and this has been an exercise in futility and frustration for all involved for the executive who were involved as a whole and it remains to be seen what the ultimate outcome will be.
Financially this group remains challenged as we are solely reliant of distribution of fund from SA Heart and sadly we have not received any funds from our parent organization since 2007.
It remains only for me to thank the executive for their hard work and support.

Dr Robert Kleinloog

5. Cardiac Arrhythmia Society of Southern Africa (CASSA)
I must again acknowledge and thank the Executive Committee for their contributions during the past year. They are the Immediate Past President Prof R Scott Millar; elected members Ms J Daniels (Treasurer), Prof A Okreglicki (Secretary), Dr IWP Obel, and Dr A Thornton; co-opted members Dr A Stanley, Dr D Milne and Dr H Van Rensburg; industry members Ms H Henry and Mr W Stranix. I must also thank the Executive Officer Ms Franciska Du Toit for her tireless efforts. The committee met 3 times by teleconference in the past year (29 January, 16 July and 12 October), as well as at a 2-day Bosberaad at Marloths Park (25-27 April).

In terms of CASSA’s role in education, I am pleased to report a successful meeting entitled “Sorting out Syncope” held at Gallagher Estate in Midrand in March this year. The hub of this meeting was lectures by Dr Blair Grubb who is a renowned expert in this field, and author of the definitive text book. He hails from Toledo, Ohio USA and he addressed the common and benign forms of syncope such as neurocardiogenic syncope and other autonomic syndromes, in which he is world-renowned expert, and also emphasized that syncope may be more malignant and the fore-runner to sudden cardiac arrest. The meeting closed with a panel discussion including (apart from Dr Grubb), a neurologist, a psychiatrist, a vascular surgeon and an ENT specialist which made for some interesting discussion. It has been decided that due to relatively poor attendance at the annual CASSA symposium held during the SA Heart Congress (due to synchronous meetings with other Special Interest Groups), that CASSA will hold such a symposium annually in future more or less mid-way between the SA Heart Congresses. The next one in 2010 will be on atrial fibrillation. During his stay, Dr Grubb flew to Cape Town where he addressed the Cape Town branch of the SA Heart Association, Groote Schuur Grand Rounds, as well as a meeting of the Groote Schuur Registrars. It is intended to use a visiting CASSA speaker similarly at satellite meetings in the future. CASSA has contracted with 6 corporate members, namely Medtronic, Amayezu, Sanofi-Aventis, Cordis (J&J), Boston Scientific and Boehringer-Ingelheim, and I must gratefully acknowledge their support without which we would not be able to achieve much.

In terms of promotion of research, CASSA is supporting the ARVC registry of South Africa to a limited extent financially.
In regard to CASSA’s role in healthcare policy and standards, I am pleased to report an increase in recognition for the role that we have to play, and that through the year we have had interactions with a number of players, including Discovery Health, Netcare Hospital Group, PACE, Resuscitation Council of SA, and the Medicines Control Council. I will not elaborate on those details, but I would like to mention that our representative Dr Anthony Stanley attended a meeting at the Council for Medical Schemes to participate in a clinical advisory committee on the revision of specific Prescribed Minimum Benefits, specifically in regard to the arrhythmia treatment algorithms. Also that our representative Dr Pro Obel together with a speaker sponsored by Medtronic viz Prof Martin Cowie of the Royal Brompton Hospital, attended the meeting of the “Medical Advisors Group (MAG)” in August, at which Prof Cowie elaborated on the guidelines and cost-effectiveness of device implantations.

The CASSA website is at www.cassa.co.za, and we are continuing to develop this as the main communication tool of the Society. An exciting new development is access for all CASSA members to electronic versions of 3 prominent arrhythmia journals, viz Heart Rhythm, Journal of Cardiovascular Electrophysiology and Pacing And Clinical Electrophysiology (PACE), as well as the New England Journal of Medicine. This is good value for a R50-00 annual subscription fee and I would urge members of the Association to join CASSA not only for this reason, but also because of exciting developments in cardiac arrhythmia management which lie ahead and are relevant to all cardiac practitioners.

In conclusion, once again it has been my honour to serve as President of this Society for the past year and I acknowledge again the work of my fantastic committee.

Dr Ronald M Jardine, President - CASSA

6. Lipid & Atherosclerosis Society of Southern Africa (LASSA)

The Lipid and Atherosclerosis Society of Southern Africa (LASSA) remains affiliated with both the South African Heart Association (SAHeart) 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. Expertise in severe dyslipidaemias remains mainly at a few teaching hospitals where facilities and staff are still shrinking. The relentless erosion of support for medical and allied professionals in government service was brought to public attention by the protests against the Occupational Specific Dispensation but has not resulted in any tangible improvements. The increasing administrative bodies and procedures with decreasing support for sustaining or growing expertise in our field of interest remain a concern and negatively impact on the contributions that can be made to healthcare, research and education in South Africa. Newsletters were sent to inform members of new developments when international meetings were attended by some of the LASSA members.

The conjoint meeting with SEMDSA happened from 17th - 21st April 2009 with the 9th LASSA conference being on 20th and 21st April 2009. The latter day was a short lipidology course that was well-received and could form part of a national education programme if academics are better supported in the future. As is customary, colleagues who attended the LASSA meetings paid towards membership. The updated membership list was placed on record with SA Heart. LASSA remains affiliated with the International Atherosclerosis Society. A new LASSA committee was elected at the general meeting.

Prof AD Marais, Groote Schuur Hospital & University of Cape Town
Prof FJ Raal, Charlotte Maxeke Hospital & University of Witwatersrand