Annual Report of the President, 2017

This has been an extremely busy year and it is hard to believe that we are facing the last quarter of 2017. I hope this has been a productive and fulfilling 2017 thus far. In terms of SA Heart®, it has been a challenging year but also filled with new opportunities and collaborations.

**SA Heart® and the cardiology community**

This year a major aim was to further the reach of SA Heart® to the broader community- including the public, departments of Health and affiliated cardiac associations. In terms of cardiac associations and cardiac events, we continued to strengthen our links with the ESC and WHF. SA Heart® was invited to the World Summit of Circulatory Disease held in Singapore under the auspices of the WHF (as well as the Summit held in Khartoum, Sudan, which we were sadly unable to attend) and contributed to the discourse on tackling NCDs and circulatory disease in Developing countries. We have been invited to join the Global Coalition on Circulatory Disease under the auspices of the WHF. We were also represented in at least three major international meetings this year- the World Congress of Paediatric Cardiology and Cardiac Surgery in Barcelona in July 2017 (attended by several SA Heart® members as delegates and faculty), ESC Congress in Barcelona in August 2017 (again large representation from SA Heart® as delegates and faculty), and PASCAR in Khartoum, Sudan. Several other international meetings e.g. EuroPCR and EACTS had significant SA Heart® representation. SA Heart® hosted a joint session in Barcelona at the ESC Congress which was very well attended indeed and will host a further session this November at the American Heart Association, Professors Ntusi and Engel will represent SA Heart® at this event. At ACC in USA in March, we were represented by Prof Delport, who also presented the STEMI SA project, another SA Heart® initiative. As SA Heart®, we contributed to two important papers this year: Infective Endocarditis Guidelines (just recently published in the SA Heart® journal, vol. 14, no3) and the European Heart Rhythm Association (EHRA) Guidelines (Europace (2017) 0, 1–21 doi:10.1093/europace/eux240) endorsed by SA Heart® (http://saheart.org/cms/attachment/97)

**SA Heart® and the community**

SA Heart® has also had a busy year in social media and the press. Our Facebook and twitter sites are active and busy with some posts reaching over 500 people and videos with over 700 views. Our Facebook site is https://web.facebook.com/SAHeartassociation/ and our twitter handle is https://twitter.com/@SAHeart_ZA with our hashtag #SAHeartforyou . World Heart Day 2017 was celebrated in Cape Town, Durban and a few other centres and we were able to participate in some of the events.

This is an important opportunity to highlight the importance of CVD and the prevention and control avenues which we can use. Please like our posts and follow us on Twitter, we hope to focus on active interventions next year and post patient and community information. If you have any suggestions, we look forward to hearing them. There was several media moments this year as well- Expresso for Rheumatic Heart Disease Week, Drum magazine to focus on Congenital Heart Disease and The Cape Times in Cape Town to draw attention to heart disease prevention https://www.iol.co.za/capetimes/opinion/its-vital-to-curb-heart-disease-among-our-women-young-people-11520749 , together with several radio interviews especially during heart Month. SA Heart® is increasingly being contacted for quotes and interviews to reflect on the burden of cardiovascular disease in this country, which is an important position for us to assume. We hope in the coming year to outsource some of the social media activities in order to create a social media strategy with definitive goals throughout the year.
SA Heart® and the Department of Health

SA Heart® was involved this year in a special initiative to engage with the Department of Health around the vision for Cardiovascular Disease by 2030. [http://saheart.org/agm-reports/viewFile/41](http://saheart.org/agm-reports/viewFile/41). A core group consisting of Profs Mokotoko, Sarkin, Smit, Zühlke and Drs Mabin and Singh, facilitated by the Crossroads initiative met several times to plan a proposal to government which culminated in a presentation to government by Dr Singh (with less than 48 hours’ notice!) [http://saheart.org/agm-reports/viewFile/40](http://saheart.org/agm-reports/viewFile/40).

We are continuing this engagement with a further meeting with the National Department of Health and hope to engage with Government around this process. Our cardiovascular Imbizo within the Congress is also geared to have these important conversations. We are hoping that SA Heart® takes a place as an opinion leader in the CVD space as we in the country and in the continent continue to grapple with these important questions.

Every member is important.

It is very encouraging to see new members within the branch committees as well as within SIG executives and on our national council. Together with the experienced members, these new members are bringing enthusiasm and new energy into our association. It is critical that the cardiology and cardiovascular community increasingly represent and include new fellows and registrars with these involved in different areas of our association. Please remember that there are science, research and educational opportunities for all members especially those in training. At the end of 2016, we awarded the SA Heart® research grant to Dr Riette du Toit and a travel grant to Dr Bradly Griffiths which he used to present at EuroPCR in 2017, but were disappointed not to see many more applicants for the quarterly travel grant and annual research grant this year. Please apply for these as well as for allied grant opportunities such as within the ESC or ACC (with endorsement from central office and regular paid-up membership to SA Heart®).

I encourage everyone to register on the membership portal, thus ensuring that you will be able to nominate, vote and stand for positions in the future but also so we are able to contact you for such relevant opportunities. Each year, we are concerned regarding the lack of participation in the nomination and voting rounds, this year was sadly no different. Please ensure that you are up to date on the portal in order that we can register a different response in the future. We also encourage everyone to use our website for information, calendars and future meetings. We also use our Facebook and twitter site for dissemination of this information.

Some notable achievements in our community

We have had some important nationally and internationally recognised achievements in our community over the past year. Our vice president Prof Lungile Pepeta, head of Paediatrics and Paediatric Cardiology at Dora Nginza Hospital was appointed as Executive Dean, Faculty of Health Sciences, Nelson Mandela University in January 2017. He will be the first Dean of this medical school and thus has an enormous responsibility. He is currently also serving as the President of the Paediatric Cardiac Society of South Africa and as the Executive Member of the South African Paediatric Association. We wish Lungile well in his new position.

Professor Peter Zilla’s team recently were awarded the first and the second prize of the annual innovation award of the European Association of Cardiothoracic Surgery (EACTS) in Austria. SAT (Strait Access Technologies) is a UCT spin-off company of the Chris Barnard Division that was founded in 2008 with the goal...
to develop heart valve prostheses for the mainly young patients with rheumatic heart disease who live in low- to middle-income countries and have no access to open heart surgery. The team have developed heart valve devices that are affordable; durable and easily implantable. The prize winners were Dr. Jacques Scherman and Dr. Gottardi from Austria, who spent time at SAT to develop a balloon product to be used during endo-vascular implants. Read the official report of the prestigious event. [http://saheart.org/agm-reports/viewFile/42](http://saheart.org/agm-reports/viewFile/42)

Another innovation Prize went to Paediatric cardiologist Dr Nikki Van Niekerk recently for her work on Pulse oximetry screening. This work screened new-borns for critical congenital heart disease and also won a film award a year to highlight the need for early diagnosis and screening in this population. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KBxC3LK8j9Y&feature=share](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KBxC3LK8j9Y&feature=share)

Our immediate Past-president Karen Sliwa will be awarded an honorary doctorate from the Sorbonne University in Paris in October. This is a singular honour and we congratulate Karen on this tremendous achievement and recognition of her work in Africa and in particular her mentorship of students and researchers across our continent.

Finally, in what has been hailed as the “biggest breakthrough in South African cardiology since Dr Chris Barnard’s first heart transplant” nearly 50 years ago, South African and Italian medical researchers have identified a gene that is a major cause of sudden death among young people and athletes. Prof Bongani Mayosi, a former SA Heart® President led the team that discovered the gene, called CDH2, that causes arrhythmogenic right ventricle cardiomyopathy (ARVC). Heartiest congratulations to him and the team for this amazing discovery, published in Circulation Cardiovascular genetics. [http://saheart.org/client/publications/viewFile/60](http://saheart.org/client/publications/viewFile/60)

Our community is one of cutting edge innovators and leaders- Please let us know if there is a notable achievement in your branch or SIG so that we can spread the news on our website and social media in order to continue to inspire our fellows and registrars.

(Photos can be accessed in online Newsletter version of this report).

Fundamentals to Innovation.

Our congress is almost upon us and we owe Europa Organisation Africa, under the guidance of Sue McGuiness a huge debt of gratitude. Sue and her team took over the congress organising in May this year after SA Heart® released MCI of their contract. Since May, it has been quite challenging especially with the current financial climate, the extremely modest financial result of the 2016 congress and our new venue but Sue and her team together with David Jankelow and his team have done an amazing job in a very short period of time. We are all looking forward to what is sure to be an amazing congress and outstanding scientific meeting. This year we will also be recording some of the sessions to go onto a new portal called “ Your SAHeart” which will allow members who have not attended the event to broadcast the major talks and gain CPD points. We hope to expand this next year and provide a new opportunity for education through this portal.

Next year, Dr Iftikhar Ibrahim and the Pretoria branch will be hosting the 2018 congress- we are still in negotiations regarding the venue but we already have an exciting theme” What is the future?” Our congress is our premier event so plan your clinics and program around it for next year now already.
Important joint activities

These have continued with excellent issues from our SA Heart® journal launched together with a new journal website. We encourage all to continue to contribute especially your original research for consideration. SHARE has had a good year with presentation at Africa PCR and ESC Congress and continued funding for 2018. Our regional branches have all been very active with several local meetings with high attendance. Our ethics and guidelines committee, under direction of Dr Eric Klug has been reviewing key documents throughout the year and SASCI together with Dr JP Theron and David Jankelow have provided important advice related to private practice matters. Finally Prof Ntusi and Dr Tawada Batau have provided educational, research and support for those working in full-time salaried positions. We anticipate further development in this area over the next year, as we find ourselves on a more stable financial footing and engage further with the new financial support landscape.

This year I have relied heavily on members of National Advisory Council, the SA Heart® executive committee, the heads of all the standing committees (with representatives from all SIGS), the editor of the SA Heart® Journal and the Chairperson of SHARE as well as the chairs of each of the SIGS and regional branches and board of directors- some of whom are stepping down after these coming elections. I would like to thank each one of you for your commitment to SA Heart® and the time and energy given to your portfolios.

I would also like to express my thanks to Prof Karen Sliwa-Hähnle, in her Immediate Past-President capacity for her engagement in all things SA Heart® and kind assistance. My thanks and appreciation also to the entire National Council, SIG presidents, Prof Ntsekhe and Elizabeth Shaafsma from SHARE, Profs Doubell and Lecour and team from our Journal, The Committee chairs: Profs Ntusi (Full-time salaried) Dr Klug (ethics and guidelines) Dr Tawanda Batau (Education) and Dr JP Theron (Private practice) are to be commended for their support and assistance over this year. My sincere thanks must go to the members of the SA Heart® Board: Prof Francis Smit, Prof Pravin Manga, Dr Hopewell Ntsinjana, Dr Paul Adams, Dr Sajidah Khan and Dr Vash Mungal-Singh who have provided sage advice and commitment during this year.

Please support your executive and the committees by actively participating and communicating your concerns, ideas and praises. Any Association is always only as vibrant and lively as its individual members are. I look forward to partnering with you all to elevate the message of CVD in South Africa and to consolidate the wonderful efforts of the previous SA Heart® executives.

My personal thanks and utmost appreciation goes to Ms Erika Dau, who is amazing in her tireless devotion to our association and who constantly gives of her commitment, critical eye and boundless energy. We are very lucky to have her in our association.

I look forward to meeting you all at SIG, branch and committee meetings or SA Heart Congress 2017. Please feel free to email me directly with any comments, suggestions or concerns.

Kind regards

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