From the President's Desk

After a good and optimistic start to the year for most of us, the world, as we know it, came to a grinding halt with the COVID-19 pandemic. Academic meetings were cancelled, people were prevented from going to work and patients were prevented from coming to hospital. I expected to have very little feedback to give, but, in true South African fashion, people found new and innovative ways to continue providing services, and it is with more than a little pride in my colleagues that I present this report.

I would like to thank the SASCI Executive Committee that was elected at the SASCI AGM 2019 for their contribution and ongoing guidance. The SASCI Leadership team is Hellmuth Weich (President), Sajidah Khan (Vice-President), Cobus Badenhorst (Treasurer), Graham Cassel (Secretary), Jean Vorster (PPC), Ahmed Yaciat (STEMI SA), Mpiko Ntsekhe, Makoali Makotoko, Chris Zambakides, Gavin Angel, Shaheen Pandie, JP Theron, Jens Hitzeroth, Farai Dube and Waheeda Howell (ISCAP).

I would like to thank our industry corporate partners for their continued and unwavering support. Your professional and financial contribution is applauded. The following companies contribute during 2020 - Ascendis, Baroque Medical, Biotronik, Boehringer Ingelheim, Boston Scientific, Disa Vascular, Edwards Health Science, Terumo, Merit Medical, Medtronic, Riverdene, Siemens, Terumo, Torque Medical and Vertice Medtech.

This report represents a significant investment of time and effort from many people [including admin staff, academic input, sponsors, and legal experts] and I would like to thank every individual involved. Without you the Society cannot exist.

Warm regards
Hellmuth Weich
President SASCI

Educational initiatives continue to be a cornerstone activity for the Society. Calendars are filled with webinars that have become the new normal for education events and meetings, and the unintended consequence of “webinar fatigue” is difficult to avoid. SASCI is, however, focused on providing continuous education to the cardiology community through interesting and worthwhile topics. This format allows for extended reach of audiences and expert faculty internationally. The highlights of our educational initiatives are:

SASCI @ SA Heart Congress & AfricaPCR 2019: AfricaPCR Course remains our seminal annual educational event receiving substantial Exco time and effort to optimise the learning. 42 Cardiologists [incl 22 Fellows] that applied for a grant were sponsored to attend the SA Heart/AfricaPCR congress 2019 [please see full list on SASCI website].

SASCI Expert Programme
Prof Tony Gershlick, Professor of Interventional Cardiology, University of Leicester visited various cath labs in Johannesburg, Pretoria, and Cape Town from 3 to 15 November 2019, spreading his time across public and private hospitals. Prof Gershlick proctored Cardiologists on complex PCI, with specific focus on Bifurcations. During his visit he presented at the SA Heart Pretoria and Johannesburg Branch meetings with 51 and 31 attendees respectively and a roundtable discussion dinner was also arranged in Cape Town. This proctorship program was made possible by an unconditional educational grant from Vertice Healthcare and has been confirmed to continue in years to come.

Society for Cardiovascular Angiography and Interventions Fall Fellows Course 2019
With support from SCAI and Boston Scientific, SASCI supported five South African fellows to attend the SCAI Fall Fellows course in December 2019. The five recipients were Ndikondisene Tshiovhe (WITS), Ashondren Naicker (UKZN), Zimasa Jama (CT), James Fortein (UFS) and Jerry Chen (UP). The following attendees secured own travel support Dr David Mashilo (Charlotte Maseke), Dr Nachie Lekin (Charlotte Maseke) and Dr Kavira Bundhoo (Mauritius) making this our biggest African delegation ever to attended the prestigious SCAI Interventional Cardiology Fellows Course in Las Vegas (6 to 10 December 2019), SASCI is looking forward to support Fellows to attend the virtual SCAI Fall Fellows Course 2020.

SASCI Proctorship Programme
Dr William Lombardi, Clinical Professor of Medicine in the Division of Cardiology at the University of Washington Medical Center visited multiple cath labs in Cape Town and Durban from 13 to 17 January 2020. Dr Lombardi proctored Cardiologists on complex PCI and CTO cases and was acclaimed as an exceptional teacher throughout. He also included the allied practitioners in his teaching with a strong focus on maintaining a holistic view of the cath lab. A roundtable discussion dinner was also arranged in Durban with robust discussions and debate focussing on Complex PCI and CTO. This proctorship program was made possible by an unconditional educational grant from Medtronic.

SASCI Visiting Professor Programme 2020
We welcomed Prof Greg Barsness from the Mayo Clinic, Rochester, USA who travelled to South Africa as the Visiting Professor for 2020. Dr Barsness taught and proctored at the various Medical Schools in SA from 7 February to 22 March 2020. He was well received in Cape Town, Durban and Pretoria but his tenure had to be cut short due to the COVID-19 worldwide pandemic. The SA Heart Branch and SASCI Evening Lectures that also expose Cardiologists and Allied in private sector to our VP took place in Cape Town and Durban. The evening lecture “State of the Art STEMI Care: Strategies for Success” was video recorded and has been made available on the web and with CPD accredited Question-
naire. We hope Prof Barsness can return to continue his sterling work at some stage in the future. Please see Prof Barsness own report back separately.

Prof David Holmes is confirmed to return to South Africa in 2021 as Visiting Professor. The multiyear program support received from both Medtronic and Pharma Dynamics makes this program a reality.

**RC Fraser International Fellowship**

SASCI sends a Fellow to Prof Simon Redwood at Guy’s and St Thomas’ Hospital, London for up to one month, annually. The incumbents are Dr George Harris (UFS) under 2019 program and Dr Karim Hassan (US) for 2020. We hope that both candidates will be able to travel following COVID-19 in 2021. The call for nomination for the 2021 candidate will be made in Q4 2020 with travel in 2021. Boston Scientific continued support of this annual program is much appreciated.

**Fellows Course @ Columbia University New York City Feb 2020**

Darrin Naidoo (Inkosi Albert Luthuli Central Hospital), Mazwi Mabika (Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital) and Bradley Brits (Steve Biko Academic Hospital) had the opportunity to travel to New York to attend this Medtronic supported International Fellows Course.

**SASCI International Webinar: COVID-19 and the Heart**

SASCI hosted, together with the University of Stellenbosch (Tygerberg Hospital), an International Webinar on COVID-19 and the Heart, on 30 April 2020 via Zoom. Close to 300 attendees from 23 African countries (including RSA, Ghana, Morocco, Namibia, Mauritius, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Algeria, Tanzania, Zambia, Congo, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Gabon, Uganda, Cameroon, Egypt, Benin, Angola, Niger, Cabo Verde, Sudan, Botswana), as well as Singapore, Russia, Ireland, Romania, Belgium and the USA participated in this event. This truly reflects the tremendous reach virtual events allow us in delegate attendance and faculty.

A local perspective on the Epidemiology and Projected Course of Disease were provided by Prof René English and Prof Heike Geduld (Stellenbosch University). International faculty included Dr Eric Eckhout (Switzerland), Prof Gregory Barsness (USA), Dr Paul Ong (Singapore) and Prof Chris White (USA), who provided their insight into how COVID-19 affected interventional cardiology practice around the world. Dr Karim Hassan presented on “COVID-19 and Myocarditis” and with Dr Hellmuth Weich elaborated on “Heart drugs for the COVID Patients and COVID drugs for Heart Patients”.

We are incredibly pleased with the attendance and positive impact of this webinar and look forward to continuing Educational Initiatives via Webinars during the lockdown period.

**SASCI and ISCAP Ethics Webinar**

On 11 June 2020, SASCI hosted an Ethics webinar on the controversial and thought-provoking topic of resuscitation of COVID-19 patients, and the risk to the healthcare practitioner, where Prof Henry Lerm, Chairperson-Legal of the South African Medico Legal Association, addressed the SASCI and ISCAP audience. Prof Lerm highlighted the fact that, even though we do not have all the answers now, South African Healthcare Practitioner’s need to develop an advanced care/risk plan for dealing with pandemics in future. Thank you to Dr Sajidah Khan for moderating this webinar and to Vertice Medtech for their unconditional educational grant and support. This webinar had a tremendous turnout of 350 delegates.

**SASCI, CASSA and Paediatric Society Webinar**

The SASCI collaborative Webinar with the Cardiac Arrhythmia Society of Southern Africa and the Paediatric Society of South Africa was held on 22 July. We had the privilege to host Dr Kim Rajappan, a consultant cardiologist and electrophysiologist at the John Radcliff Hospital in Oxford, England, who spoke on approaching the COVID-19 peak and what to expect in your arrhythmia patients. Prof Lindy Mitchell, a paediatric cardiologist at Steve Biko Academic Hospital and secretary of the Paediatric Society of South Africa, spoke on the tragic impact and effects of COVID-19 due to the delayed treatment of children with congenital heart disease.

Thank you to Prof Ashley Chin, President of CASSA, for moderating on the call and for Vertice Medtech for their continued support. This meeting was well attended by over 230 delegates.

**SASCI - Solution for Calcium – Webinar**

SASCI Vertice Webinar on Solutions for Calcium was held on 28 July. During this webinar we were privileged to hear from international and local cardiologists on their experiences, and varied approaches to dealing with calcified arteries. Prof Anthony Gershlick, a cardiologist at Leicester’s Hospitals UK, who was a visiting expert to South Africa in 2019, presented alongside Dr Pieter Van Wyk and Dr Farouk Mamdoo, with Dr Dave Kettles as moderator. We had a great turnout of 240 delegates. Thank you to Vertice Medtech for sponsoring these webinars.

If you have missed any of our webinars, please visit the SASCI Website to listen to the recordings made available within 10-day of the event.

**The new Cardio Fellows Summit Series**

SASCI is passionate about educational programs but cognizant of the fact that Fellows in training receive majority of their education at work. We therefore have to be innovative to design something tailored that would supplement this and provide an opportunity for them to network and get a bit of cross-pollination from their peers at other institutions. The result is the Cardio Fellows Summit Series of webinars. The format was designed in collaboration with Prof Jean Marco (Founder and Honorary Chairman of PCR) to center around practical case presentations, and interactive discussions with a focus on decision making and individualised patient care.

The first webinar of the series was hosted on 21 September by Prof Jean Marco with Dr Hellmuth Weich (Tygerberg Hospital) as moderator. The 65 Delegates included Fellows and early-career cardiologists from South Africa, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia as well as France.

Each webinar will feature an international expert supported by an experienced South African colleague [to help ensure applicability and audience participation] as well as a panel of senior Fellows to participate in the discussions. In addition to Prof Marco, we have Prof Simon Redwood and Prof Anthony Gershlick confirmed as faculty of the series. We are extremely excited about this new webinar series and will proceed with this project beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. The next three webinars will be hosted end October, November 2020 and January 2021.

**SASCI COLLABORATIVE WEBINARS**

Renal Denveration Webinar
We plan to establish a well-coordinated National Database, which

Mpiko Ntsekhe and J Vorster.

na Delport, Hellmuth Weich, Nqoba Tsabedze, Shaheen Pandie,
(Rootnik), Arthur Mutyaba, Sajidah Khan, Jens Hitzeroth, Rhe
and Alfonso Pecoraro (Research), Martin Mpe and Len Steingo
up STEMI SA.

porating those individuals who have been instrumental in setting
sectors, who are young and more experienced, as well as incor
We have a well-balanced group from both the public and private

Pan-African Association of Structural and Coronary Intervention
Webinar
Pan-African Association of Structural and Coronary Intervention
(PASCAR), an affiliated group of PASCAR, hosted a Webinar on
“How I moved my practice to complex intervention”, with Prof
Farrel Hellig (South Africa) as key faculty, and Dr Mohamed Jeilan
(Kenya) and Dave Kettles (South Africa) as moderators. The panel
included Drs Emmy Okello (Uganda), Awad Mohamed (Sudan),
Habib Gamra (Tunisia) and Ahmed El Guindy (Egypt). Following an
insightful lecture from Prof Hellig, questions from the delegates led
to excellent discussions.

This Pan-African Webinar hosted more than 110 delegates from 20
African countries, as well as from as far afield as Europe, UK, and
the USA. This webinar was made possible by unconditional support
from Boston Scientific and Medtronic.

SASCI Annual Fellows Workshop 2020
With the current COVID-19 pandemic and government regulat
ions, the Fellows Workshop Organising Committee had to move
this longstanding educational initiative to later in 2020 [14 and 15
November], and we plan for a hybrid meeting offering both face-
to-face attendance, as well as joining remotely from different
centres in South Africa (and even other African countries) through
a webinar offering. A benefit is that virtual presentations will also
expand our faculty reach to include international and other Afri
can countries. The academic content will be developed by the
SASCI Executive under Convenorship of Drs Jean Vorster, Graham
Cassel and Hellmuth Weich, in collaboration with the Society for
Cardiovascular Angiography and Interventions (SCAI is the SASCI
equivalent in the USA).

STEMI SA Annual Report
The aim of STEMI SA is to educate, improve networks and facilitate
early reperfusion therapy of patients with ST elevation myocardial
infarction in South Africa. This initiative is a national programme,
under SASCI, with clear goals and timelines.

We have a well-balanced group from both the public and private
sectors, who are young and more experienced, as well as incor
porating those individuals who have been instrumental in setting
up STEMI SA. The STEMI SA Committee is: Ahmed Vachiati (Chair
person), Adrian Snyder (Ex-officio Chairperson), Dave Kettles
and Alfonso Pecoraro (Research), Martin Mpe and Len Steingo
(Education), Arthur Mutyaba, Sajidah Khan, Jens Hitzeroth, Rhe
na Delport, Hellmuth Weich, Nqoba Tsabedze, Shaheen Pandie,
Mpkio Ntsekhe and J Vorster.

We plan to establish a well-coordinated National Database, which

is validated (quality assured) and that can be used for further re
search and collaboration, with the aim of improving the care of
patients with STEMI (roll out towards the end of 2020). We intend
to improve the Systems-of-Care through two main arms - namely
Education and Research

Education
• A STEMI SA Champion launch webinar is planned for 12
November with Dr Thomas Alexander as the keynote speaker
supported by local experienced Faculty. The intended audience is the “hub” hospital cardiologists that will champion
STEMI SA in their referral network.
• Education of referral networks will be supported through face
to face and virtual education with support and content pro
vided through STEMI SA. This program will be initiated in Q1
2021 and will see centrally planned meetings held in Johannes
burg, Pretoria, Cape Town, Durban, Bloemfontein, Port Elizabeth
and East London
• We plan to update the online SASCI website with user-friendly
slides on the investigation and management of STEMI.

Research
• It was decided that the STEMI India Database platform will be
best suited to South Africa, it is a pre-existing online platform
with minimal costs, and we will benefit with the vast experience
of Dr Thomas Alexander. Data capturing on this platform is ex
pected to commence in November 2020.
• A Publications Policy Task Team was formed to establish proto
cols, ethics, consent form and a publication policy.

Publications
• Coronary reperfusion in STEMI patients in Sub-Saharan Africa
Tom Mabin, CVJA July 2020
• Decline in acute coronary syndrome hospitalization rates during
COVID-19 lockdown in private hospitals in South Africa
(Submitted)
• How to set up STEMI regional networks: providing best possible
STEMI care. A practical methods paper from the Stent – Save
a Life Initiative Canziliello A, Alexander T, Delport R, Toth GG,
Ong PJJ, Snyders A, Belardi J, Michael KY, Lee MKY, Pereira H,
Mohamed A, Mayal J, Piek JJ, Wijns W, Baumbach A, Naber CK.
EuroIntervention 2020
• Stent-Save a Life international survey on the practice of prima
ry coronary angioplasty during the COVID-19 pandemic.
Pereira H, Naber C, Wallace S, Garcia T, Abdi S, Aleyun B,
Farto-Abreu P, Huang W, Kanakakis J, Lee M, Mohamed A,
Orlic D, Orfitz P, Sobhy M, Terzic I, Win K, Piek JJ, Zvolen
EuroIntervention. (Submitted)

We would welcome involvement from healthcare providers and
industry. If anyone would like to participate, kindly liaise with
George Nel at the SASCI office (george@medsoc.co.za)

AHMED VACHIAV

STEMI SA Chair
ISCAP Annual Report

Despite our unprecedented journey, over the past several months, we as the ISCAP team, managed to network and collaborate to pursue our goals. We managed to navigate our work and personal lives, with continued focus on enhancing the quality of our profession. The team is:

**ISCAP Chair:** Waheeda Howell  
**Gauteng:** Isabel Bender (Vice Chair Nurses as well as Regional Chair), Kerry Moir (Radiographers), Jamie-Leigh Hayes (Technologists) and Ramabai Zwapano (Nurses)  
**Western Cape:** Carmen November (Regional Chair), Sabira Khatieb (Radiographers), Human Nieuwenhuis (Technologists) and Maggie Petersen (Nurses)  
**Kwazulu-Natal:** Selvan Govindsamy (Vice Chair Radiographers as well as Regional Chair), Amit Singh (Technologists) and Don Pardechi (Nurses)  
**Free state:** Marlet Bester (Technologists)  

**Interventional Society of Cath Lab Allied Professionals (ISCAP)** is especially focussed on ongoing training for all Cath Lab Allies incl nurses, radiographers, and technologists across South Africa and engagement as appropriate with colleagues in the rest of Africa and internationally.

We had a roaring start to 2020, with face to face Lecture Series’ starting in January followed by much disappointment with the initial uncertainty of the pandemic and eventual lockdown. The society however embraced virtual training as good alternative to continue to support and educated our Allies. We would like to thank our industry partners for their support and understanding during this time and know that we are ready to “Jump” right into 2021 with face to face meetings with augmented by ongoing virtual training as appropriate.

Below is a summary of our face to face meetings and the workshops to date:

**ISCAP Riverdene Breakfast Symposium:** On 25 January, we hosted a CPD accredited Breakfast Symposium in Durban on the “Practical Application of Contrast in the Cath Lab”. The allies had the privilege of listening to Claudia Giger, practice manager and fulltime radiographer in private practice, who was well received. We had a wonderful turnout of 57 Attendees at this workshop. A special thank you to the Riverdene team, who made this workshop possible.

**ISCAP Biotronik Siemens Takeda Series 2020:** From January to March [pre lockdown] ISCAP hosted a series of face to face meetings in Bloemfontein, Cape Town, Durban, Midrand and Port Elizabeth. This series focussed on the topics Closed Loop Stimulation, Fabry Disease and the Cardiac Patient as well as Radiation Protection. During this series Dr Moses, Pecoraro, Tsabedze, Govender, Khan, Adamu and Butau presented on Closed Loop and/or Fabry Disease. Radiographers Ernest Horley, Kerry Moir, Selvan Govindsamy and Sr Kerri Meyer presented on Radiation protection in the cath lab. All speakers were well received, and the topics noted as informative. The combination and diversity of these topics was favourably received and a great start to our 2020 programme.

**ISCAP CPD Webinar: COVID-19 in the Cath Lab Environment:** ISCAP was quick to respond to the pandemic, giving guidance to allied professionals regarding PPE & Peri Procedural Management, Clinical Guidelines in Cardiovascular Care in the COVID-19 period as well as considering Emotional Wellbeing and Motivation of Healthcare Practitioners, by hosting our first webinar on 25 April. Over 200 Allied professionals attended this webinar. Thank you to our speakers, Dr Charles Kyriakakis, Sr Keri Meyer, and Dr Michael Niss for sharing their insights with us, and for Waheeda Howell as moderator.

**ISCAP Unit Leaders Virtual Meeting:** On 30 May, ISCAP hosted a Cath Lab Unit Managers and Leadership Meeting, with cath labs from across South Africa represented by more than 30 Unit Managers and ISCAP Exco Members. This meeting was focused on the challenges each lab faces during the COVID-19 Pandemic, of which PPE, redeployment of staff, slates, ethics protocol and emotional well-being and support staff were mentioned and discussed. ISCAP hopes to build on these relationships in the future, to continue to support of Unit Managers and their Cath Lab teams.

**ISCAP Catheterization Manual Modules 1-4:** During the COVID-19 period, with constraints on Educational meetings, we are motivating our Allies to use the ISCAP Modules and Questionnaires to study the content and complete the online CPD Questionnaires to receive up to 12 CPD points (3CEU’s per module and questionnaire completed; pass rate 70%). Thank you to all the Cath Labs that have embraced the online ISCAP Manual and continue to complete the online CPD Questionnaires. Boston Scientific support through their Educare platform the past 3 years is acknowledged with appreciation.

**ISCAP Riverdene Webinar:** On 5 September, ISCAP hosted a webinar that exposed delegates to knowledge from Dr Erika Jones, a nephrologist, on the topic Contrast, and the effects on the kidneys. Radiographer, Claudia Giger, shared on the topic of Contrast, exploring the medium. We also had the privilege of listening to Attorney Prof Henry Lerm, sharing his insight on the controversial topic of Ethics associated with Euthanasia. We had a good turnout of 140 allies and hope to build on this for future webinars. Thank you to Selvan Govindsamy, our moderator and Riverdene for sponsoring this webinar.

**Upcoming Webinars to diarize for 2020:**

- **3 October 2020 @ 09:00 - Topics:**  
  - Changing the Coronary landscape - Scoring, Sculpting and Carving  
  - IVUS IFR and Beyond  
  - Ethical Implications for the Health Care Practitioners  
  - During- and Post- COVID Pandemic  

  **Faculty:** Dr Chris Zambakides (Cardiologist) & Dr Michael Niss (Clinical Psychologist)  
  **Sponsored by Ascendis Medical & Cardaxes**

**24 October 2020 @ 09:00 - Topics:**  
  Bifurcation and the impact on the Team
It seems that, the Draft Public Procurement Bill of 19 February 2020 (Bill) is National Treasury’s response to the obligations set in section 217 of the Constitution by regulating public procurement. By the nature of the activities of SASCI members, in particular, many procedures are technical in nature and require the utilisation of a large variety of technical equipment and devices, including various components of equipment for vascular interventions, structural heart interventions, various pacemaker components, etc. These usually have highly technical specifications and SASCI was anxious that procurement of these items is made under the guidance of experts in the field, hence the commentary submitted by SASCI to the National Treasury on 30 June 2020.

This Bill is meant to consolidate all public procurement legislation, and to streamline the legal framework in which the government can procure goods, services, and infrastructure. Furthermore, the Bill purports to address seemingly contradictory legislation and to address the justiciability of various instruments published by the National Treasury. As it appears, the Bill sets out to provide practical guidelines for the implementation of procurement rules.


Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs), pose one of the biggest threats to health and development globally, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. The National Strategic Plan seeks to direct the actions that will be undertaken between 2020 and 2025 across sectors to redress and to reverse the growing threat posed by NCDs. The overarching objective of this Plan is to prepare the country for reaching the Sustainable Development Goals related to NCDs (to reduce, by one-third, premature mortality from non-communicable diseases (NCDs) through prevention and treatment, and promote mental health and well-being by 2030 (Goal 3.4).

SASCI is of the view that there are flaws in the National Multi-Sectoral Strategic Plan for the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases 2021-2026, which need to be addressed. Consequently, SASCI submitted comments to the National Department of Health on 31 July 2020.

We thank Ebbie Iheanyi (lawyer at EKA) for her diligent and professional legal services, as well as Dr Tom Mabin who continues to contribute substantially from the health practitioner perspective.

SASCI INTERACTION WITH FUNDERS

1. Discovery Health CAD Programme for 2020

Discovery Health Coronary Artery Disease (CAD) Care Governance Initiative negotiations are underway with SASCI. There is a review of a draft proposal underway that is aimed at regulating the possible relationship between the individual practices which opt to participate in the programme and Discovery Health. There have been lessons learnt from the previous CAD agreements with Discovery Health, which necessitated a review of the contract. There have, furthermore, been learnings from the Discovery Health forensic audits on individual practices which had to be factored into the contract. SASCI will continue to work towards ensuring that our members interest is professionally represented to the ultimate benefit of your patients.

2. Medihelp TAVI case

SASCI’s complaint to the Council for Medical Schemes (CMS), in terms of section 47 of the Medical Schemes Act, was ruled in
SASCI’s favour against Medihelp. Medihelp appealed the decision of the Registrar of the CMS and SASCI is seeking a set-down date at the Appeals Committee to have the matter heard. SASCI is cognisant of the delays which have plagued the CMS of late, and which have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Notwithstanding, SASCI will continue to engage with the CMS to bring finality to the matter.

3. Medihelp vascular codes
SASCI was extremely concerned about the non-funding of vascular codes by Medihelp, which are part of the scope of the profession of cardiology, and which activities cardiologists can, under Rule 21 of the HPCSA ethical rules, perform. The blanket ban imposed on payment for these valid and legislated procedures was unique to Medihelp and SASCI viewed this stance as unjustified and unacceptable. SASCI continued to engage Medihelp to resolve such matters and it appears that, after 2-year impasse, this seems to have been resolved. Members are requested to revert to the SASCI office if these codes are rejected, and should they have any other coding issues which may arise.

4. Whether a specialist physician can perform interventions in the field of cardiology
Medscheme was disputing payment of certain claims relating to interventional cardiology procedures on the basis that the healthcare professional was not registered as a Cardiology sub-specialist, but rather as a general Physician (018). Cardiology seems to only have been recognised as a sub-specialty by the HPCSA in the mid-1980’s and, up to that time, all that was required to practise cardiology was 2 years cardiology training in a recognised training facility, after registering as a physician. Such a generation of practitioners were recognised as cardiologists but were not registered as such by the HPCSA. SASCI’s view was that, should the General Physician be trained and experienced in rendering the specific services, it would be irrational and unreasonable to prevent the healthcare professional from undertaking such services, in particular where patients require access to such life-saving interventions. Medscheme was informed therefore that they cannot prohibit a professional service from being performed, however Medscheme may question the professional codes being used and the fees which the professional could charge.

All SASCI submissions can be accessed at http://www.sasci.co.za/content/page/sasci-guidelines

SASCI Coding Projects Overview

There are two major coding projects being conducted in cardiology under the auspices of SASCI PPC, with Karen van der Westhuizen (coding expert) and Dr Tom Mabin (practitioner expert) as project leads:

- The Cardiology Coding Handbook (update 2020)
- The Cardiology MDCM (Medical Doctor’s Coding Manual) Coding update with CCSA2018 crosswalk

The Cardiology Coding Handbook
The SASCI Coding Handbook was created in 2014 by Dr JP Theron et al. The purpose of the handbook is to create uniformity in coding standard procedures. This also creates a platform for communication where available codes are not sufficient. The SASCI Coding Handbook was extensively reviewed in the past 9 months, with assistance from various private sector practitioners and coding experts. New coding scenarios were added to the handbook and the master draft document has been sent for final review. We expect to issue the updated version to be available before the end of 2020.

The review of the document entails, but is not limited to, the following:
- The handbook layout to be more user-friendly
- The coded scenarios should reflect current coding practice
- Possible clinical procedure shortfalls should be identified and address by consensus opinion

It is important to remember that the Coding Handbook is a living document. Scenarios and guidelines will be added as the need arises. Feedback from practitioners on the document is required to ensure clinical completeness and validity.

Once the Executive Committee has signed-off, and the legal opinion updated, the SASCI Coding Handbook 2020 will be ready for distribution.

The Cardiology MDCM Coding update
A completed MDCM (Medical Doctor’s Coding Manual) review was sanctioned by SASCI in February 2019. CCSA2018 is used as the benchmark for the Cardiology MDCM update. CCSA2020 was released in January 2020. The Cardiology crosswalk has been updated to include the CCSA2020 changes. CCSA is the industry accepted benchmark to use when a MDCM code update is requested. The MDCM updates are approved and published by SAMA (South African Medical Association) after submission and extensive consultation. This will be the first MDCM update in cardiology since 2006, and is crucial to substantially move cardiology coding forward.

The Cardiovascular System has now been cross walked to CCSA2020, except for the Open-Heart Surgery and Peripheral vascular system. SASCI is awaiting confirmation from the Paediatric cardiologists to update their section. New MDCM codes are proposed, based on CCSA2020 for procedures, as well as on new technology, while some MDCM descriptions will change based on CCSA2020, some will be deleted, and some will remain the same.

Meetings were held with Discovery and Medscheme to allocate resources for modelling and cost-analysis of the codes. Both meetings were very productive, and the funders expressed their gratitude for including them in the update process. Active
engagement with the funders will continue throughout 2020.

SAMA staff resources are unfortunately limited as the SAMA principal has been on sick leave since the beginning of the lockdown. SAMA indicated that normalisation is expected by August, which will lead to scheduling of the next SAMA review meeting. Since the beginning of September 2020, SAMA has restructured their resources and on-line crosswalk working meetings is conducted twice a week.

The crosswalk is currently being analysed using the CCI-edits in combination with MDCM (CCI is the Correct Coding Initiative published in America to prevent unbundling or over coding). This CCI analysis will be utilised by the funders to calculate the costing of the new crosswalk. This will indicate if the crosswalk is cost-neutral to both funders and practitioners, or if the cost implication could be detrimental to either.

Please do engage with Karen van der Westhuizen (via the SASCI office if needed).

Dr David Jankelow secured an "Urgent Errata communication from SAMA that was sent to all healthcare stakeholders with regards to MDCM items 1276 and 1252". All members are encouraged to engage with SASCI and/or seek legal representation (such as Elsabe Klinck Associates), before engaging with the schemes on queries or especially audits.