It is during these unprecedented times that our dedication towards healthcare and our patients are at the forefront. I am mindful of the great sacrifices we make every day, demonstrating professional acumen, personal courage, and ethics in our fight against the pandemic. Thank you to each healthcare worker and doctor at the forefront, and each practice limiting patients and appointments to the essential.

HeFSSA Exco: Martin Mpe (President), Jens Hitzeroth (Vice-President), Eric Klug (Ex-Officio President), Daryl Smith (Treasurer) and Nash Ranjith (Secretary), Karen Slwa, Tony Lachman, Makoali Makotoka, Nqoba Tabedzde, Ntobeko Ntusi and Mpho Ntskehe. I would like to thank my outgoing Executive for their many years of faithful service to HeFSSA but hope we retain a significant leadership group to ensure continuance of our focus in 2021 and beyond. New leaders will also be welcomed and elected at our virtual Annual General Meeting to be held before year end.

The following noteworthy activities took place.

HeFSSA Heart Failure Guideline: The HeFSSA Chronic Heart Failure Guideline 2020 (based on ESC HF 2016 with substantial Africanization) was accepted and published by SAMJ end of August 2020. Thank you to Dr Jens Hitzeroth who led the review with substantial contributions from the HeFSSA Executive (as clinical and research experts), This publication includes an update Chronic Heart Failure Algorithm and will be made available on the HeFSSA Website.

On Thursday, 2 July, HeFSSA hosted a Heart Failure Specialist Webinar targeted towards the cardiologists and specialist physicians, Dr Nqoba Tabedzde focused on an update overview of SARS-COV2 and the viral pathology and links to Heart Failure. Prof Mpako Ntskehe spoke from personal experience of the Western Cape being the initial epicenter of the SA pandemic beginning of July. This webinar was sponsored by Pharma Dynamics and attended by 250 delegates.

The HeFSSA Non-Cardiologist Webinar Series focused on Contemporary Heart Failure Management was specifically targeted to the General Practitioner, Specialist Physician and Allied non-prescriber HCP. The topics and faculty were:

- Tele-Cardiology and Lifestyle Modifications for the Heart Failure Patient (11 July): Dr Tony Lachman presented on the Role of Tele-Cardiology and the impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on the Heart Failure Patients, Dr Sandra Pretorius spoke on Nutrition, and advising Heart Failure patients on immune boosting and heart healthy food choices. This event was well attended by more than 400 delegates from across South Africa, as well as the continent.
- A Review of the Heart Failure Guidelines 2020 (1 August): Dr Jens Hitzeroth gave an in-depth review of the guideline publication in SAMJ with Prof Ntobeko Ntusi, Dr Blanche Cupido and Dr Charles Kyriakakis as panellists. The webinar was attended by 750 delegates and the programme and content was exceptional.
- COVID-19 and Heart Failure (22 August): Prof Nash Ranjith presented on the topic with Dr Hoosen Randaree & Dr Rohan Lutchman as panellists and Dr Martin Mpe as Moderator. The webinar was attended by 560 delegates.
- Diabetes and Heart Failure (12 September): Prof Eric Klug gave an in-depth presentation on Diabetes and Heart Failure and was joined by Prof Ntobeko Ntusi as Moderator. The webinar was attended by 570 delegates.

A record of more than 2300 delegates attended this webinar series and reinforce the incredible reach of virtual training. This will be a positive legacy of the lockdown, but cannot replace face to face training (both will have a place in the future). The recording of the webinars is available on the HeFSSA Website for those delegates who were not able to attend.

Research: HeFSSA HF Clinical Snapshot Survey is planned for 2020. Makodi Makotoka is spearheading this initiative with Dr Thabiso Lithelu assisting on the project. A pilot study will be conducted at the University of the Free State after which we will launch nationally. This study will hopefully become an annual audit of HF in South Africa allowing us to reflect year on year and in due course over extended periods. This survey could ultimately inform resource alignment and investment in Heart Failure networks.

HeFSSA Nutritional Update: One of the major enquiries HeFSSA has received during the past few months and specifically discussed on the webinars, were the GP’s request for a focus on Nutritional Guidance for Heart Failure Patients. In response, HeFSSA has updated our Nutritional Guidance, available on the HeFSSA Website. We thank Dr Sandra Pretorius who has played a fundamental role in this project, with assistance from cardiologists, Dr Lachman & Mpe. This project has grown to include Heart Healthy Quarterly Newsletters, Heart Failure Patient Workbook, and supplements such as immune boosting during COVID-19, seasonal recipes and tips on healthy shopping to name but a few. We hope to add a series of educational videos with Dr Sandra Pretorius, an experienced dietician, who has been involved with this project since 2015, to educate GPs and Patients on Healthy lifestyle choices and cooking.

The 10th annual face-to-face HeFSSA General Practitioners Programme has been postponed to the beginning of 2021. The theme will be “Contemporary Heart Failure Management” and the topics has been prepared by Jens Hitzeroth (Heart Failure Guidelines 2020), Eric Klug (Diabetes and Heart Failure) and Naresh Ranjith (COVID-19 and Heart Failure). The meetings will be hosted across South Africa and Namibia and will be presented by distinguished Cardiologists & Physicians. The smaller group and face-to-face nature of these meetings ensure hands on learning and enhance the referral network.

Due to travel restrictions no educational travel grants has been awarded in 2020. We hope to reactivate these grants in 2021.

Thank you to AstraZeneca, Boehringer Ingelheim, Boston Scientific, Biotronik, Cipla, Novartis, Novo Nordisk, Pfizer, Pharma Dynamics, Medtronic, Servier and Vertice Medtech for your corporate support and unconditional educational grants, which make our society activities possible.

The HeFSSA website is continually updated to remain relevant. Please visit the website at www.heffsa.org and contact the HeFSSA office to contribute to ensure that the items stay updated and relevant. HeFSSA encourages all parties who are passionate about heart failure to contact George Nel, HeFSSA Executive Officer at info@heffsa.org.

Best wishes,
Martin Mpe
HeFSSA President