Pharmacy Week 2008

I don’t know what your experience was, but mine was overwhelmingly positive. As I write this, we are still waiting for reports of Pharmacy Week to reach us, but there have been some early birds so I decided to share their experiences with you in PSSA Perspectives.

The reason that my Pharmacy Week experience was so good was because the topic, far from merely being one of gloom and doom and therefore depressing, or soft and fuzzy and feel good therefore ignored, lent itself to a strong message that the media could not ignore. Everyone is so concerned about environmental issues that the media response went beyond what we normally get. In my job, I frequently deal with news or health reporters, so this is the first time that there has been an interest from environment reporters.

I do need to pay tribute to one of our colleagues here. Carla Silva is a National Executive Committee member, and a member of the South African National AIDS Council. She’s also committed to community pharmacy.

We were invited to participate in the Cape Talk/702 Medically Speaking programme as part of Pharmacy Week, and I cannot tell you what a pleasure it is to have Carla present. I can field the political questions (it’s my job, after all) and I can handle the basic stuff. I can even answer many of the questions that people ask about therapy (I do read the SAPJ, you know) (more than you, I bet) (each article at least 3 times at different stages of production) (and try coming up with CPD questions – it’s a challenge). But I’m not in community practice, so I’m out of touch with nitty gritty practical advice.

This is where Carla is amazing, and she is both empathetic and practical. It’s scary going live on the radio, where you don’t know what the question will be, and sometimes the motives of the callers are highly suspect. Carla handles it so well. Thank you, Carla. I’m so glad you’re one of the team!

Academy conference

Another year, another successful Academy conference. I’ve probably said it to you before, but every time I go to an Academy or SAAHIP conference, I’m filled with enthusiasm and optimism for the profession. I’ve convinced that it’s because the format is conducive to sharing what people are actually doing. There’s definitely comfort in showing positive outcomes, and there’s no opportunity for it to turn into a whinge and whine session. I come away knowing that there’s a wonderful future ahead for pharmacy, and I want to be part of it.

Next month’s SAPJ will carry a report on Conference, but in the meantime, congratulations and good luck to the new Executive Committee.

Challenge to community pharmacists

I know that the SAAPI conferences are also positive learning experiences. Now we need to find a way of letting community pharmacists showcase their achievements. Here’s a challenge. Why not start by sending me short reports and a couple of photos? I know you’re doing interesting and satisfying things. Luckily, I do know one or two (hundred, that is) community pharmacists so I know what you did last summer. I mean I know what you’re up to. No, that doesn’t sound quite right either! I know that many community pharmacists are the unsung heroes of the professions, and I want the rest of our family to celebrate their successes too.

Next month, I’m planning on sharing some good news stories about community pharmacy. How about sending me your story? We need to hear it.

Amuse or cure?

This month, I have something else to share with you. It’s a quotation. (There’s a great website, www.quotationspage.com. It has a list for a quote of the day but so far I’ve resisted the temptation to subscribe.)

Since I was at school (Jeppe High School, in case you weren’t paying attention last month), I’ve been fascinated by the love-hate relationship between French philosophers Voltaire (nom de plume of François-Marie Arouet) (author, humanist, rationalist and satirist, according to www.quotationspage.com) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (political philosopher, ibid). (No websites in those days. My opinion was formed by a really good novel by Guy Endore – the Heart and the Mind.) (Yes, I know it was a novel, but at 16 years old I wasn’t actually into heavy tomes.) (Mm, I’m not now, either.)

Voltaire really didn’t think much about medicine or doctors. He made remarks like “Regimen is superior to medicine” (and we still proclaim the benefits of healthy lifestyles) and “Doctors are men who prescribe medicines of which they know little, to cure diseases of which they know nothing” (no comment, in the interests of self-preservation).

But my absolute favourite is “The art of medicine consists of amusing the patient while nature cures the disease”. I know that there have been amazing advances in medicine and in knowledge since Voltaire’s day, but you know what? I think there’s still an element of truth in this one.

Lorraine Osman