SEFAKO MAKGATHO
HEALTH SCIENCES UNIVERSITY

FOCUS on SMU

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How SMU coped through the national lockdown

SMU DVC for Teaching, Learning and Community Engagement Prof Eunice Seekoe recently shared details of how SMU coped during the national lockdown with Daily Higher Education News. Below are some of the points she highlighted.

SMU, a survey was undertaken across faculties to identify vulnerable students, that is, those without adequate devices for remote learning and those needing support with data to access the internet and learning management system. It must be mentioned that even completing the survey proved challenging for some students.

Although the survey was distributed via the University website and to students' mobile numbers by SMS with links to the survey on the website, many could still not fill in the forms without access to internet. Many students even lacked smart phones. To assist these students' academic advisors from the institutions Centre for University Teaching and Learning called students with issues individually and completed the forms on their behalf until all the affected students were assisted. Of the 6 250 registered students at SMU, 2 850 (46%) were identified as needing laptops and a larger number not having access to internet. The results identified even those whose homes did not provide a conducive study environment and who even with provision of a device and data could not adequately engage with teaching and learning online.

As a response to these findings, the University adopted a multimodal approach to remote emergency teaching and learning. This, according to Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Teaching, Learning and Community Engagement, Professor Eunice Seekoe, entailed dispatching printed learning guides and learning materials to students in their home localities at the height of the lockdown. However, even that presented its own challenges as students, without lecturer guidance through difficult subject matter content, could not progress on their own.

***N.B :** This article appeared on the Daily Higher Education News published by Universities South Africa.*

To access the full article and other details go to:
https://www.newssite.co.za/usaf/standard-bank-laptops-smu.html

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Prof Stephen Hendricks **appointed to chair the dental deans committee**

By Maditsi Matlala

Focus on SMU spoke to Prof Stephen Hendricks, SMU's Dean of the School of Oral Health Sciences, on his appointment to Chair the Dental Deans Committee, of the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA).

MM: What do you think were the reasons by your peers to nominate you to be the chair of the dental deans committee?

Prof Hendricks: I can only assume that they feel I have the competence and abilities to Chair the Committee.

MM: How will your position as the chair of dental deans' committee benefit SMU and oral health sciences students?

Prof Hendricks: It will mean that any new information obtained on the issues of Dental Education can be shared first hand with the School of Oral Health Sciences. Furthermore, the School can also come up with new innovations which can be shared with the Dental Community in South Africa. The SMU will now also have a voice to make direct inputs into Dental Affairs of the HPCSA.

MM: Small and young as SMU is, compared to other medical schools, does your nomination to chair dental deans' committee serve as an expression of the confidence in you and the SMU?

Prof Hendricks: Indeed, I do think so.

MM: Are there any issues that you are hoping to address in particular, for the benefit of SMU that you were unable to deal with, whilst you were not chair of dental deans' committee?

Prof Hendricks: There are several issues including: The double payment of HPCSA Registration fees for Com Serve Students in 2021; the motivation for Bachelor of Oral Hygiene (BOH) and Bachelor of Dental Therapy (BDT) graduates to also be included in the Com Serve programme; and the Review of the Dental Specialists Registrar Accreditation programme.

Prof Eunice Seekoe provided essential tips to other Universities and participants in a virtual discourse on how to become a Professor

By Phaladi Seakgwe

SMU DVC for Teaching, Learning and Community Engagement Prof Eunice Seekoe recently took part in a virtual discussion hosted by the Vice - Chancellor of the University of Cape Town to discuss requirements from different institutions on how to become a Professor.

Prof Seekoe outlined the requirements according to how it is done at SMU and other universities where she served before. Amongst other things she emphasized the importance of thorough preparation when one embarks on a journey to become a Professor. She further said that it is a requirement in other universities that you must have published some work in peer reviewed journals and other publications. Furthermore, she indicated that others would require one to have teaching experience. Distinguished Professors and heads of institutions formed part of the discussions and made their inputs to enrich the discourse.

Participants at this dialogue commended Prof Seekoe for her insightful contribution to the discussion particularly on issues of mentoring and leadership, which she believes are essential ingredients for success when aspirant academics embark on such a journey.

SMU's Candle Light Ceremony a local act with global connection

By Maditsi Matlala

Organised on World AIDS Day (WAD) by Dr Khanya Makwakwa, the Candle Lighting Ceremony had dual purposes - to remember all the health care professionals who succumbed to AIDS and COVID 19; and also to link up this locally organised ceremony with the campaign, by the World Health Organisations (WHO), expressed as Sustainable Development Goals, to eradicate all communicable diseases by 2030.

Dr Makwakwa, from the school of oral health sciences, highlighted that the 2020 WAD theme "We are in this together" sought to inspire communities to join hands in solidarity with those who are infected, affected and living with COVID 19 and HIV/AIDS. She also added that the memory of all the health care professionals who have died in the line of duty, should be kept alive and never be forgotten.

Held mainly as a virtual event, in line with the COVID 19 social distancing regulations, the ceremony was addressed by several speakers ranging from Ms Raphiri, who is the school of oral health sciences HIV coordinator who spoke about the programme she is championing to raise awareness about AIDS and making sure that AIDS stays under the spotlight, amidst COVID 19 distraction.

Basic Security Training

By Maditsi Matlala

The SMU Security service put a number of security personnel through an intensive basic security training which focused on, among others, physical training, crowd control and firearm arm handling skills.

Bidding farewell to the golden generation of SMU

By Maditsi Matlala

SMU celebrated and bid farewell to staff members going on retirement. These 26 are the golden generation of SMU staff bearing a very rare distinction – they spent years of loyal service on the same premises, at Ga-Rankuwa but under three different university brand names, namely firstly MEDUNSA, MEDUNSA Campus of the University of Limpopo (UL) and the current Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences (SMU) from which they were retiring.

Class of 2020 B Pharm Grand Gala Dinner

By Maditsi Matlala

The recent Class of 2020 B Pharm Grand Gala Dinner lived up to the billing of its organisers – all spared no cent to really look the part – wearing latest in sartorial elegance styles, at the Fire and Ice Hotel, in celebration of their successful conclusion of the Pharmacy degree programmes.

They listened attentively to Prof Patrick Demana, the Dean of the School of Pharmacy wishing them well in their new endeavours. Prof Natalie Schellack also shared her experiences and words of wisdom with an aim of preparing them as they are on the verge of entering the world of work, as suitably equipped pharmacists that the health care industry so desperately needs, especially in the COVID 19 epoch.

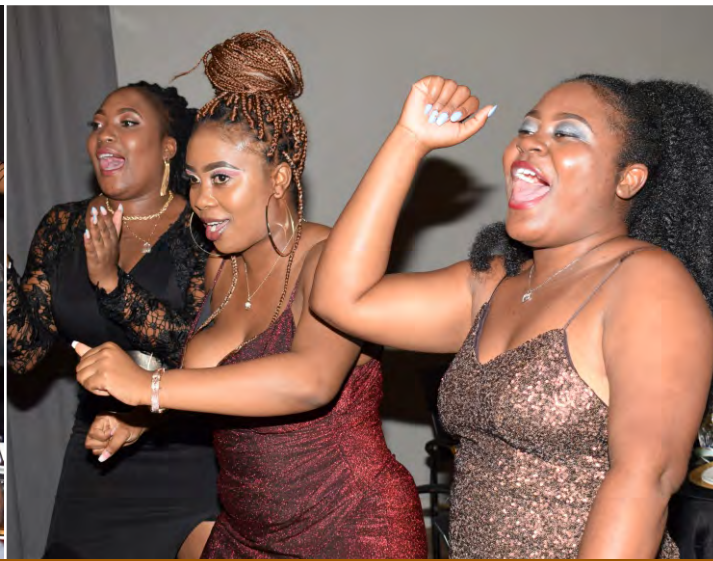
Prof Schellack said that the tittles they will be carrying, as pharmacists should not change their personalities. They should keep their feet on the ground, be positive, productive and principled health care practitioners. She added that in the world of work, there is a need to forge and need keep professional networks for mutual professional growth and support.

The class also relished the opportunity to listen to the key note address by Mr Kgabo Komape, representing the Independent Community Pharmacy Association (ICPA) – who shared with them his industry experiences, as a practising pharmacist, who qualified decades ago. He highlighted that pharmacists are part of a critical part of frontline staff in war against all manner of diseases.

He emphasized the importance of pharmacists embracing the ethic of working together with other professions such as medical doctors to ensure that the patient receives better care.
Mr Komape added that the COVID 19 pandemic has disrupted the health care landscape in many ways. But it is also shaping new approaches and practice of health care delivery, not only in the country but also beyond our borders. The pandemic is also opening new opportunities that the newly qualified pharmacists must take advantage of. To earn the dividends of COVID 19 era, new pharmacists must be open to change and never be afraid to explore uncharted territories and find new paths amidst the new COVID 19 new normal.

“Build something that you reckon the world needs, shape the world, every adversity presents you an opportunity to prosper”, Komape said.

Ms Retang, the Class of 2020 B Pharm students expressed her the gratitude for the confidence they had by electing her to represent them. “I am proud of the Class of 2020 B Pharm for always putting your best foot forward” she said, to a thunderous applause from her grateful class mates.



Prof Elzbieta Osuch – re-elected to the Council of College of Clinical Pharmacologists of South Africa and to the Senate of the College of Medicine of South Africa (CMSA)

By Maditsi Matlala

In a show of confidence, the members of the Council of Clinical Pharmacologists of South Africa have re-elected Professor Elzbieta Osuch, to senate, for a three year term.

Prof Osuch, who is the current Head of the Department of Pharmacology & Therapeutics at Dr George Mukhari Academic Hospital (DGMAH/SMU), was nominated and subsequently re-elected, in a secret ballot process. Serving in the senate, she is afforded an opportunity to contribute to the management of the business and affairs of the College of Medicine of South Africa (CMSA).

The senate of the CMSA is responsible for the election of fellows, members, certificants and diplomats. It drafts regulations; appoint officers; councils, committees and sub-committees and delegate powers to these committees. It takes policy decisions; appoints panels of examiners; authorise expenditure and attend to matters of routine business.

The clinical pharmacology speciality was recently approved in South Africa (SA), which was a first on the African continent. This milestone occurred concurrently with the World Health Organization (WHO)'s, publication of a position paper entitled 'Clinical pharmacology in health care, teaching and research', which explains the benefits of clinical pharmacologists to decision-makers.

"Clinical pharmacologists are medical practitioners trained in 'the scientific discipline that involves all aspects of the relationship between drugs and humans", Osuch explained.

The MMed (Clinical Pharmacology) qualification has been recently approved at SMU in accordance with the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF) specifications for a Professional Masters National Qualifications Framework (NQF) level 9 qualification, as well as in compliance with the regulations of the CMSA.

SMU seeks to be a benchmark African University focused on the developmental needs of its communities and epitomising academic excellence and innovativeness. An introduction of a new programme in Clinical Pharmacology makes SMU one of the leaders in innovativeness, as it will be the third programme introduced into the country, the first in Gauteng.

"The MMed Clinical Pharmacology programme will strengthen the University's position as a knowledge partner to the healthcare professionals, drug regulatory agencies, pharmaceutical industry as well as academia, and will increase the number of postgraduate students (particularly those from previously disadvantaged backgrounds), research productivity, clinical pharmacology service delivery, and the much-needed training of individuals in clinical pharmacology," said Prof Osuch.

The programme aligns with the SMU thrust of Health and Wellness. It responds to the critical shortage of Clinical Pharmacologists in the country, and especially in rural areas.

A higher level of responsiveness to diverse regional and national human resources, skills and knowledge needs in healthcare provision, in particular for rural areas and the public sector that is in line with the social accountability focus of the Faculty of Health Sciences. It increases the cadre of Clinical Pharmacologists, which will be greatly needed for the implementation of the NHI to ensure equitable health care for all. This programme provides opportunities for the training and development of registrars in Clinical Pharmacology at the SMU, School of Medicine. The applied competence and skills derived from the training in Clinical Pharmacology is sufficient to allow graduates to be accredited specialists with registration recognition with the HPCSA.

The important role of clinical pharmacology in appropriate patient care, drug policy, drug development, and regulatory affairs has been recognized internationally. Specifically, clinical pharmacology encompasses the following areas: research related to the clinical use of drugs, such as pharmacological effects and mechanism of action, pharmacokinetics and drug metabolism, efficacy and side effects of medications; advice to health care providers (physicians, drug and therapeutics committees and others), regarding the appropriate and cost-effective use of drugs; drug epidemiology; legal and ethical issues; development of new drugs; clinical trials; safety of drugs (pharmacovigilance); economics of healthcare; drug regulatory affairs (marketing authorization of drugs).

The primary purposes of a professional Master's Degree are to educate and train graduates who can contribute to the development of knowledge at an advanced level such that they are prepared for advanced and specialised professional employment. Successful completion of the professional Master's Degree completion requires a high level of theoretical engagement and intellectual independence as well as demonstration of the ability to relate knowledge to the resolution of complex problems in professional practice including therapeutic drug monitoring and poisoning.

This programme contributes to the drive to revitalise clinical research in a developing country like South Africa to enhance health care at all levels by providing specialist knowledge and competencies in clinical pharmacology, and promoting good policy-making.

There is an urgent need in South Africa for skilled clinical pharmacologists to undertake training and research and offer their services to ensure rational use of drugs in humans. The need for Clinical Pharmacologists specialists originates from recent developments in health sciences and healthcare practice. There has been an enormous increase in the number of therapeutic products and formulations. Unfortunately, this expanding therapeutic armamentarium has been associated with an increased incidence of adverse drug reactions, drug interactions, drug resistance, drug overdose and medical errors Because the increasing cost of new drugs is a major concern, insight into pharmaco-economic evaluation of new interventions is of critical importance. The population of patients with special dosing requirements is expanding – to mention but a few: those at the extremes of age, with co-morbid conditions, and those who are pregnant. There have been calls for increased clinical research in South Africa that is largely focused on the robust evaluation of therapeutic interventions, and addressing health needs of the local population.

Oath taking awards

By Maditsi Matlala

The School of Pharmacy Oath Taking Ceremony, that was held this morning, at the Sports Centre, marks a delightful platform on which the final year pharmacy students underwent a transition from university students to pharmacists, who are ready and willing to serve patients in the health care industry, of the country. The occasion belonged to Ms Tiisetjo Malatji who won the Best 4th year student award, The Best Overall Student Awards, for which she won a Gold Medal and Certificates.