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Dear SNSA members

The 26th meeting of the society was held in Umhlanga in early August in partnership with the Neurological Society of India. We had 284 participants from 11 countries and this speaks well about how we are doing as a society. We really want to thank the local organizers Sameer Nadvi and Mike du Trevou for doing an excellent job, and our members who turned out in such numbers to participate in the meeting. Graham Fieggen has set the standard high as SNSA scientific chair and I know that Tony Figaji will continue to be innovative as the new scientific chair. If you missed the meeting please take a look at the attached program – you will not want to miss next year. Our colleagues from India made an amazing contribution to the academic content and we look forward to participating in their meeting in December this year. We were honored to have a dinner for past presidents of the society attended by 11 neurosurgeons who had been in the position. This was an occasion to reflect on all we have achieved but also to look forward at what we can still do. We have a fantastic group of young neurosurgeons and registrars in our society and I look forward to them becoming more involved.

Our 27th meeting will be held in Sun City from 2nd to 5th August 2018 and we have another great partnership planned.... An update will be sent out as soon as this is confirmed and the website is live.

We had the best turnout ever at the AGM where we took a number of important decisions **that will directly affect every neurosurgeon in South Africa**. The constitution was updated and the NeuroSafe program was approved. NeuroSafe will be a group of strategies to limit malpractice claims against neurosurgeons. We all know that the medical litigation environment has worsened dramatically over the past decade with increasing numbers and quantum of claims. The effect has been to increase malpractice premiums to an unacceptable level. Legal reform is required to cap claims and ensure only valid cases are brought to court but this is a long way off and as a professional group we need to do something sooner.

As neurosurgeons, we need to make sure that we operate only when it is indicated, consult colleagues where help is required, communicate well with patients and document this. As a starting point we have a SNSA consent form that satisfies all the HPCSA requirements. There is a page for the surgeon to complete, indicating what will be done and why it needs to be done. A second page is for completion by the patient where they put down why they are having the procedure, giving the surgeon a chance to manage unrealistic

expectations. Included in the consent is a paragraph about dispute resolution through mediation as opposed to litigation.

While mediation can't be forced we hope that informing parties about mediation through a pre-mediation meeting may make them chose this option rather than litigation. Mediation has been successful in many areas of commercial and civil dispute but has not been widely used between patients and doctors. It offers many potential advantages over litigation in that it is typically faster, less costly and aims to achieve a satisfactory outcome for all parties. Medical cases in litigation typically take 7 years to reach a conclusion and there can only be one winner and a lump sum payment. Both MPS and Constantia are supportive of mediation and we will continue to work with them to facilitate this process.

In addition to consent documents we have instituted rules for being an expert witness to limit bias and ensure an evidenced based approach when testifying. We are also forming a SNSA chosen panel of experts who can provide an opinion to both plaintiff and defence teams. All documents relating to NeuroSafe will be available in the members section of the SNSA website. This is just the start of our program and further updates will come. Gian Marus has put in a lot of time in helping with medico-legal matters and I want to thank him for all his effort and help. I would also like to thank the executive of SASOG for sharing their experience with the betterobs program in trying to limit malpractice claims.

We are also looking to the future- at the SNSA meeting a breakfast session was held for young neurosurgeons and we discussed a vision for our society members which is summarized in the following paragraph. *We aim to be a community of professionals striving for a caring and evidence based approach to patients with neurosurgical conditions. We support diversity within our group and equal access to care for all patients.* Being a community requires communication and support between us. We achieve some measure of this through our annual meeting but could do better. Great ideas were put forward such as a SNSA phone app, regional meetings and mentorship and we will do our best to get this started.

The WFNS World Congress was held in Istanbul from 20th to 25th August and the executive committee meetings were attended by Graham Fieggen and Allan Taylor. Changes were made to the constitution which we supported including abolishing the interim meeting after 2019 and having the WFNS congress every 2 years from 2021. This also means that the voted positions on the administrative council will now be for 2 years rather than 4. Graham has been voted as the 2nd vice president for the continent of Africa which is an honor and I know he will look after the interests of African neurosurgery. SNSA will bid to host a future WFNS meeting.

Kind regards



Allan Taylor
SNSA President