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Dear Colleagues

The first month of 2016 has passed so rapidly that most of us are already looking forward to our first break for this year. Herewith an update on SNSA matters since the previous newsletter 6 months ago.

1. **CONGRESS 2015:**

The 24th congress of the SNSA took place in Port Elizabeth in September 2015. Dr Justin Basson was the congress chairman and Prof. Graham Fieggen was the chairman of the scientific committee. The congress was well attended and the papers were of a high standard. The speakers from overseas were excellent and actively contributed to the program up to the very last day of the meeting. The congress was also a success from a financial point of view.

2. **COMPETITION COMMISSION MARKET INQUIRY:**

The public hearings of the inquiry have started. Our Society is represented by the SAPPF. The findings of the commission are not expected to be made public soon. Recommendations will then be made to the minister of health. This is expected to be a lengthy process. Changes in the private healthcare system are not expected soon.

3. **THE HPCSA:**

The ministerial task team published its findings late in 2015. The task team concluded that the HPCSA is "in a state of multi system organizational dysfunction". The HPCSA has decided to perform its own internal investigation and not to react to the recommendations of the MTT immediately. FOSAS issued a press statement on 2016/01/21 which urged the HPCSA to take the necessary action to implement the recommendations that had been made by the MTT.

4. **FEES:**

Healthman has provided tariff schedules for neurosurgery in their comparative tariff guide that was sent by e-mail to each member in January 2016. This is based on cost studies that were performed in the past and adjusted for medical inflation. This serves as a guide and members should calculate their own Rand conversion factor that applies to their practice. The escalation in our indemnity insurance premiums will play a significant role when this year's tariff structure is calculated.

5. NEW PROCEDURAL CODES FOR INTRACRANIAL SURGERY:

New procedural codes for intracranial surgery based on CPT 4 for intracranial surgery have been published in the SAMA Medical Doctors' Coding Manual. Healthman undertook to inform each Medical Aid of the changes. We will keep you informed when the new codes will be implemented and which medical aids have not accepted it. I want to thank Prof Allan Taylor for all the effort he has put into this.

6. CONGRESS 2016:

The 25th annual congress of the SNSA will take place at Century City Conference Centre in Cape Town from Wednesday 27 July to Friday 29 July 2016. Prof Graham Fieggen and Dr Mike du Trevou and the congress committee are hard at work to make this a milestone meeting in the history of the SNSA. This is a combined meeting with CAANS (the Continental Association of African Neurosurgery) and the CNS (Congress of Neurological Surgeons). A significant number of delegates are expected from our continent, especially North Africa, as well as from the United States. The congress website is already up and running. There is a direct link from the SNSA website. A provisional scientific programme is already available on the website. The meeting will comprise of parallel sessions, breakfast sessions, plenary sessions and hands-on sessions. Social events are planned for Wednesday and Thursday evening. Abstract submissions are already open and will close on 15 March 2016. Early bird registration for the congress as well as preferential booking rates for accommodation will close on 1 May 2016.

7. MEMBERSHIP:

Our Society has approximately 130 members at the moment. Sixty four members are in private practice, 13 members are in limited private practice, there are 12 members in the public sector and the rest are registrars. We want to encourage our registrar members who have qualified recently to become full members.

8. WEBSITE:

A secure section has been added for members. Members are requested to register on the website to gain access to the secure section. This provides access to previous newsletters, minutes of previous AGM's, our constitution and our code of ethics. Members can also check and update their personal information. We are also busy to changing the "FIND A DOCTOR" section to make it easier for members of the public to find an SNSA member neurosurgeon in a particular region.

9. MALPRACTICE INSURANCE:

There has been a 17% increase in MPS subscription rates for neurosurgeons in private practice for 2016 which will have a significant effect on our income. According to Healthman, AON no longer accepts new applications for insurance from neurosurgeons. A new insurance company has entered the market recently and is willing to accept new members. Their published subscription rates are lower than that of MPS but subscription rates are based on each respective doctor's risk profile. It is still early days and no recommendations can be made.

10. MEDICO-LEGAL TASK TEAM:

Dr Gian Marus has been co-opted to become a member of the Exco to head the task team. He has had a number of meetings with important role players in the legal fraternity and insurance industry. Further meetings with representatives of MPS will take place in March and July 2016. Dr Marus will provide feedback to members at the next AGM.

11. **MEETING WITH MPS:**

Members of Exco, Prof Graham Fieggen and Dr Gian Marus, had a meeting with Dr Graham Howarth of MPS on 6 November 2015 in order to determine the main factors behind the increase in the number of claims against our members. The Society requested MPS to provide us with statistics regarding cranial versus spinal claims; a breakdown of the claims; regional differences; justification for the fact that intracranial surgery has been put into a separate category; statistics of claims against junior versus senior neurosurgeons; feedback about claims against members versus non-members of SNSA; a break-down of money spent on legal costs versus the payment to plaintiffs; MPS's stance on mediation; reduced subscription rates for entry-level neurosurgeons; the acceptable norm for the percentage of income to be paid for indemnity insurance based on MPS's experience elsewhere in the world and a breakdown of claims that are discontinued or settled before trial and the verdict for and against the plaintiff for those cases that went to court.

The MPS is looking at individualising the risk of individual members and plan to adjust each member's subscription rate individually. This is a 2 to 3 year project.

The threshold for income from RWOP's has been increased to R500 000-00 per year which provides a bit of a relief for our members in the public sector who also have limited private practices.

12. **MPS SYMPOSIUM ON THE DETERIORATION OF THE CLAIMS ENVIRONMENT AND THE CASE FOR LEGAL REFORM:**

MPS had a meeting with the major role players in the government and legal fraternity on 2015/11/10 to discuss measures to address the rising cost of claims and indemnity insurance. Dr Marus represented the SNSA. MPS proposed that a complaints process should be set up that allows for local resolution. They also proposed that consideration should be given to finding ways to encourage alternative dispute resolution. They feel that the litigation period should be shortened as this would reduce costs. There should be a limit on general damages, future care costs and claims for loss on future earnings. The Law Reform Commission is looking into the matter but unfortunately this could take at least 4 – 5 years before a new law can be implemented.

13. **SAMED MEETING:**

A meeting between the Exco of the SNSA and a representative of SAMED (South African Medical Device Industry Association) took place at the PE Congress. The meeting was called for by SAMED to find workable solutions to ensure the sustainability of medical education in the current economic climate. The organisation seriously considers stopping direct sponsorship of delegates to congresses. Sponsorship of any stand-alone social or entertainment event is no longer permitted. Sponsorship of invited speakers will probably not be affected. A final decision with regard to direct sponsorship of delegates has not been made yet.

The possible changes implemented in future could have a significant effect on congress attendance by members. This could lead to a significant drop in the income of the SNSA which is another reason to build up financial reserves while we can.

14. **REGISTRAR WORKSHOP:**

This took place in Umhlanga on 12-13 February 2016 and was organized by the department of Neurosurgery of the University of Kwazulu-Natal. Members of the Society in academic posts as well as the private sector took part in this inter-active workshop

Healthcare in the public as well as private sector is facing major challenges at the moment. However, many other developed and developing countries have their own problems.

Remember to save the date for the congress in Cape Town!

Best regards

JACQUES DU PLESSIS
PRESIDENT: SNSA