

WELCOME NOTE



Guest Editor, Professor Eric Klug

University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa
President, SA Heart® 2023

Welcome to the SA Heart® Congress 2023

The SA Heart® Annual Congress is the centre piece event in the academic calendar of the organisation. It gives me immense pleasure to acknowledge the tremendous work of our Congress Chairman, Dr Farouk Mamdoo, and his committee and to recognise the contributions made by our special interest groups and SA Heart® members in general to the academic programme. It is noteworthy, that many international speakers recognise the quality of this Congress, and again grace our platforms to further enhance the experience for all delegates. Cardiac collaboration is the theme this year, as Farouk recognises the need for the virtuosos (super specialists) in our discipline to communicate and collaborate, as often there is no conductor for the patient, co-ordinating their care. The emphasis this year is also on being practical and “hands on”, with opportunities throughout the programme for delegates to attend training villages and other venues for “live training”.

Continuing with the theme of collaboration, it is our intention to re-engage with and bring back to SA Heart®, the South African Cardiothoracic Society (SOCTS) as a special interest group. SOCTS has been missed from our structures, and we must recognise their crucial importance, contribute to the training of future surgeons and speak meaningfully to their ongoing education endeavours. This must all be done with cognisance of their independence and special needs. Dr Tim Pennel, a member of the SA Heart® Board, and recently elected Vice-President of SOCTS, will be leading this endeavour.

I assumed the responsibilities of President, SA Heart® in October 2022, following Dr Blanche Cupido. Blanche had made tremendous strides during her presidency term, particularly recruiting excellent candidates for the SA Heart® Board, solidifying structures within the organisation, establishing an excellent Fellow course, a national journal club, and much more. I was therefore able to build on her legacy. A significant loss to SA Heart® occurred relatively early in my term, when Professor Deon Bezuidenhout, SA Heart® Board Chair, died suddenly, while in Germany, in April 2023. His leadership, kindness, and outstanding academic contributions in the field of prosthetic heart valve research are well recognised and remembered by the cardiac community and beyond. We need to replace 4 Board members and nominate a new Board Chair. Please be active in this process and nominate deserving individuals. Two Board positions need to be filled, 1 by a financial expert and 1 by a lawyer.

By reading this message, you have already placed yourself as a rare breed of member – an individual interested in the workings of SA Heart®. The committed SA Heart® member is the

backbone of our organisation, and dearly appreciated, as we often find ourselves in the position of too much work, and too few volunteers. If the cardiovascular community takes the presence of SA Heart® for granted, it is regrettable. One would soon notice if SA Heart® was dysfunctional or failed, and thereby not providing functional academic structures, practice support, and career advancement opportunities, as well as not providing a national voice, speaking on behalf of the broad cardiovascular community. I appeal to you to engage with your colleagues, particularly the younger generation (under 40 years of age) and encourage them to join the structures, whether at a regional, special interest group, or national level. We have recognised, at national leadership level, that we must invest in our volunteers, educate them in different ways for their careers, so we as an organisation commit to their growth as they commit themselves to helping SA Heart®.

Healthy, constructive relations with the pharmaceutical and device industry is crucial for both of us. We have embarked on a structured, professional drive to improve the interaction between us, to constructively create an ethical framework that will form the skeleton of our combined bodies, onto which the flesh of academic interaction, public engagement and career advancement can be added. An important issue continues to plague our meetings – and that is the poor conversion rate from a member issuing a positive RSVP to a planned meeting to actually attending the meeting. This must be addressed and industry and us (Journal club as an example), cannot tolerate this disregard for the effort, time and money that has gone into structuring such an academic meeting. Besides engaging with our related business partners, we also hope to engage with other areas of the business world, hitherto untapped.

A new committee has been created and fills an important gap. It has been called the Media, Funder and Digital Committee (MFD), with an interim Chairman, Dr David Jankelow, tasked with leading this committee. As part of our strategy to be the national voice, the “go to” organisation on all things cardiovascular in South Africa, we have created this committee to strategise, coordinate and execute an effective media strategy, using our existing platforms, but adding radio and television. The funder aspect relates to managing non-interventional issues affecting our members in the medical aid space and last, but certainly not least, the digital aspect of cardiovascular disease has found a home in SA Heart®, and we hope to tackle AI innovations under this umbrella. The MFD committee will be supported and guided by a very important new addition to the SA Heart® Board, Ms Mandi Fine, with decades experience in the media space.

Welcome to our flagship event: SA Heart® Congress 2023. I look forward to interacting with you.

Eric Klug
President, SA Heart®