

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

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® Association 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.

The last year we have achieved the following:

- The South African Cardiothoracic Society (SOCTS): SOCTS has been missed from our structures, as we recognise their crucial importance, and our need to contribute to the training of future surgeons and speak meaningfully to their ongoing education endeavours. A process of re-integrating SOCTS is ongoing, 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, is leading this endeavour, which appears to be successfully entering the final stages.
- The South African Society of Cardiovascular Intervention (SASCI), led by their President, Dr Helmuth Weich, has officially fulfilled their prior signed commitments and acknowledged they are a special interest group, affiliated to SA Heart®. Their Private Practice Committee, led by Dr Chevaan Hendricks, continues to lead this valuable committee dealing with interventional issues and funder interactions. He (representing SASCI) will participate in the new National Committee, the MFD committee.
- 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. Formalisation of the committee and official voting will occur at the AGM, 2023. 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, co-ordinate 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.
- The SA Heart® Journal continues, having been through a difficult period in 2023. Dr Anthony Dalby (recently voted onto SA Heart® Board) is leading the restructuring of the editorial board, the functioning and financial strategy. Professor Ntobeko A.B. Ntusi, the prior Editor, has fulfilled his term, and we recognise and appreciate his contributions. The survival of the Journal, however, is far from assured.
- A sponsorship guideline, led by Dr Pieter van der Bijl and his Ethics and Guideline Committee, has been developed encapsulating the framework for industry sponsorship, including policy, procedure, management, and review of such sponsorships. This is indeed a very important document.
- A complete review of the Memorandum of Incorporation (MOI), Terms of Reference (TOR) of the various committees (Nominations Committee, Executive Committee, Social and Ethics Committee, and Stakeholder Relations Committee, Business Audit and Risk Committee), the Board Charter, Code of Conduct, Stakeholder Relations, The Conflict of Interest policy, and Delegation of Authority document have all been revised, led by Robyn MacMhainigh, an attorney who has contributed significantly as a Board member and to my office.
- A SA Heart® Strategic Planning Meeting planned by the President and General Manager of SA Heart® was held in Stellenbosch on 12 - 13 May 2023. Attendees included

members of the Board, separate groups of “elder prior office-bearers of SA Heart®,” and younger (under 40 years of age) together with invited guests. A facilitator was used, Natalie Zimmelman. A separate report has been compiled of this meeting and is published in this Journal. Four crucial tasks emerged from the meeting, which would be a guide for operations in 2023 / 2024. Membership growth, increasing the activity of these members, enabling the member’s journey within the organisation and growing SA Heart®’s voice, building the brand of SA Heart® were all identified as targets for the leadership and its members.

- Healthy, constructive relations with the pharmaceutical and device industry are 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: 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.
- Under the leadership of Dr Farouk Mamdoo and his committee, the 23rd Annual SA Heart® Congress, takes place in Sandton, Johannesburg, 27 - 29 October, 2023. This is a crucial event in our calendar, and this year’s congress continues the excellent work Farouk did in 2022, resulting in record revenue for the organisation and delivering a Congress of excellent academic merit.
- Our footprint in social media has grown, under the guidance of a designated officer tasked with engaging the public via LinkedIn, Instagram, and X. The SA Heart® website is fully functional and an important entry into SA Heart®. This role will be further expanded in latter half of 2023 and 2024, under the guidance of the MFD committee.

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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®.

Eric Klug
SA Heart® President