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## SA Heart®: Beating strong for South Africa's cardiovascular health

The South African Heart Association (SA Heart®) stands as a vital pillar in our nation's healthcare landscape. Our not-for-profit organisation, driven by a dedicated team and a resolute mission, serves as the powerful voice of cardiovascular care in South Africa. SA Heart®'s commitment extends far beyond advocacy – it fosters collaboration, propels research, and strives to ensure exceptional care for all South Africans, from the tiniest hearts to the most seasoned.

The strength of SA Heart® lies in its comprehensive structure. An impressive Board of directors sets the strategic course, while the executive committee translates vision into action. Special interest groups, catering to specific areas of cardiovascular medicine, allow for focused expertise. Regional branches ensure a nationwide reach, bringing SA Heart®'s resources and guidance to every corner of the country. Underpinning this impressive framework is a dedicated team. The general manager steers the organisation's day-to-day operations, while the stakeholder manager cultivates vital relationships with healthcare professionals, policymakers and the public.

Presently SA Heart® stands at a crossroad. As the leading voice for cardiovascular care in South Africa, we hold immense power to improve the health of our nation. But the road ahead is not without its challenges.

Firstly, we must solidify SA Heart®'s brand as a unified, coherent force. This means ensuring that our diverse membership – adult and paediatric cardiologists, researchers, and allied health professionals – operates under a single banner. Unity of purpose will amplify our impact and project a clearer image of unwavering support for our members.

Secondly, we need to address the growing pressure from private health funders. We cannot stand idly by when funders attempt to restrict clinical autonomy and limit diagnostic and therapeutic options for our patients. SA Heart® will be a relentless advocate for both patient well-being and the best practices within cardiovascular medicine.

The looming implementation of National Health Insurance (NHI) presents an additional hurdle. While it is admirable to strive for universal healthcare, building it on a fragile public healthcare system with strained finances creates a worrying scenario.

Engaging the next generation of cardiovascular professionals is crucial. We actively encourage younger members to volunteer and participate in SA Heart®'s structures. Their fresh perspectives and enthusiasm are vital to the future of our organisation.

By fostering a patient advisory group, we create a vital communication channel that benefits patients, practitioners, and the entire healthcare landscape. This is a major priority for SA Heart® in 2024. Advocacy efforts will hopefully work to influence policy decisions that prioritise cardiovascular health and improve access to quality care for all. SA Heart® intends to be a proactive voice in the process.

A pivotal tool in our mission is the SA Heart® Journal. However, its viability rests on finding a dedicated editor, securing financial resources, and streamlining administration. This may be the final edition of the Journal, but we cannot afford to lose this valuable platform for knowledge sharing and advancement in cardiac care.

By presenting a unified front, attracting young talent, and securing the future of the SA Heart® Journal, we can overcome obstacles and emerge stronger. SA Heart® is not just an organisation; it is a testament to unwavering dedication. It is the tireless work of the Board, the executive committee, special interest groups, regional branches, the general manager and the stakeholder manager – united by a common purpose - that ensures that every South African heart beats strong and healthy and that its members are supported, protected and secure in their invaluable professional careers.

SA Heart® needs your support to achieve its aims. A cohesive society is a powerful one. This is the moment for making a concerted effort to promote cardiovascular health in South Africa. Join us, our members, and our dedicated staff in reaching that objective. A heart-healthy South Africa will benefit all of us.