

MINUTES OF THE 1ST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF SAANT HELD ON 21 AUGUST 2007 AT THE PINELANDS LIBRARY AT 6.00 PM.

WELCOME

Mike Purvis welcomed everyone to the first AGM. There were 28 people present.

APOLOGIES :

Katherine Train, Lise Vance, Allison Kamffer.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:

Mike arrived in SA 3 years ago with his wife Nicola Zaina. On approaching the AHPCSA with a view to practising in SA, he was advised that he would be encroaching on the Naturopaths' scope of practice. After further investigation, he discovered that the practising Nutritional Therapists were keeping a low profile as there had been letters received advising them to close down and not to practise at all.

The next step came after reading an article in the SA Journal of Natural Medicine written by Heidi du Preez informing that Dieticians and Nutritionists were applying for registration of Nutritionists. If this was successful, it would effectively close the door for the registration of Nutritional Therapists, as the proviso would be that they work under a Dietician and would not be able to consult clinically on a one to one basis.

Mike wrote an article in the South African Journal of Natural Medicine suggesting the formation of an Association for Nutritional Therapists practising clinical nutrition.

On the 22 August 2006 he convened the first meeting of interested parties and 30 people attended. The general consensus was that recognition was needed for Nutritional Therapy, regulation by a recognised body in South Africa, a Professional Body for Nutritional Therapists as well as the advancement of Nutritional Therapy and ongoing education programmes.

His vision was to set standards in qualifications and provide the public access to qualified Therapists and to define the differences between Dieticians, Nutritionists and Nutritional Therapists. It was generally agreed to use the term Nutritional Therapists in place of Clinical Nutritionists or Nutrition Consultants.

In the past year an interim committee was formed, consisting of Heidi Du Preez who was responsible for investigating the legal aspects, Mike Purvis – chairing the committee, Helen Hull – collating the existing courses represented, Sara Bilbe – finances and bank account, Tracey Evans – website, Nicola Zaina – co-ordinating meetings, Adele Pelteret – admin secretary and membership, Katherine Train – constitution and Margaret Ellis – taking of minutes.

Representation was made to HPCSA – Heidi to report later. A website was set up and the AGM was scheduled to be held in conjunction with a seminar to make it worthwhile for the out of town delegates.

Membership categories were decided as follows:

- Professional Member - none as yet – once the courses have been evaluated and accredited, those who met the criteria would qualify.
- Provisional Member - those holding a recognised qualification from the courses currently submitted for approval.
- Student Member - currently studying with one of the respective courses aforementioned.
- Affiliate Member – members with a degree from another profession interested in joining, as well as Nutritional Therapists, not practising, but wishing to join.

The next stage necessary was to appoint a Council, set up a committee to evaluate the courses, increase membership, gain recognition, establish a regular newsletter, work out CPD points, established standards of Clinical Practice and provide mentors, identify and help establish a course in South Africa that meets all the criteria necessary for professional acceptance.

REPORT ON COURSES:

Helen Hull reported that SAANT is the Regulatory Body for Nutritional Therapy in South Africa and that SAANT had applied for registration with the HPCSA and, if accepted, the HPCSA would become the Regulatory Body.

The main function of a Regulatory Body is to set professional standards for training. Council would appoint a Training Committee for this task. The Committee would ensure that the profession was well regulated and recognised by other health professionals and the public. Practitioners would be seen to be of a high standard. Communication would be established with universities and other training bodies with a view to ultimately having a degree course available in South Africa.

Many Training Bodies in the UK now offered diploma courses as foundation degree courses and the opportunity to study at a University for a 4th year and obtain a degree. Distance learning courses fell short when it came to offering clinical practice, which was vital.

Diplomas and degrees currently recognised by SAANT and held by SAANT members were from the following Training Bodies:
Greenwich University, Institute for Optimum Nutrition, International Academy of Nutrition, Plaskett International College, Raworth International College, Thames Valley University, UK College of Nutrition and Health and the University of Bedfordshire.

There is no degree course currently available in South Africa.

The Plaskett course has been submitted to the HPCSA as a course currently available in South Africa but with the recognition that additional areas such as clinical practice which would be required.

All the existing Provisional Members had completed one of the above-mentioned courses and Professional Membership would be awarded to those qualifying and meeting the standards and criteria once they have been set.

LEGAL REPORT:

Heidi du Preez reported that the main goal was to be recognised and be registered with an official body such as the HPCSA. In order for this to happen, three steps were necessary:

Firstly, to set up a professional body, namely SAANT to represent us as a group. Next, a course needed to be recognised as a benchmark or gold standard as a minimum training qualification. The Plaskett course was chosen. Thirdly, to be registered with a regulatory body such as the Allied Health Practitioners Council of SA or the Health Practitioners Council of SA. The HPCSA was chosen as the first choice to apply to as Dieticians were registered with them and it made sense to go with this group.

An application was submitted and scheduled to be on the agenda for the meeting on 7 March 2007. The Board of Dietetics have applied for Nutritionists to be registered and this would give them the sole right to use the term Nutritionists. Under this application, Nutritionists would not be allowed to do clinical practice. They would be able to do community work. As our focus is clinical nutrition, we would be unable to practise if this was passed. It was our wish to have a third group registered as Nutritional Therapists. The title of Clinical Nutritionists was not to be used to avoid confusion with Nutritionists who are scientists and do not do clinical work. This meeting did not take place and was postponed until 18 March 2007.

To date Heidi had still not received the minutes; apparently the minutes needed to be signed by every board member first before being circulated. Unofficially, it was reported that the application had not been successful, but this needed to be confirmed on receipt of the minutes.

It was noted that the Nutritionists had taken 15 years to get to this point.

Heidi was liaising with Adele Taljaard, the Board Manager of the HPCSA. One of the requirements was that our scope of practice was to overlap by less than 50% with other professions such as Dieticians or Naturopaths. A document defining Nutritional Therapy is on the SAANT website.

There was currently no graduate level course available in South Africa and the overseas courses were correspondence courses which were not acceptable.

Heidi had applied to the University of Pretoria and UWC, however they had problems with Nutritional Therapy appearing to be in competition or clashing with Dietetics. To get affiliation for the Plaskett course would cost too much money and the University won't recognise us unless we are registered. HPCSA won't recognise us until we have a recognised course.

From a political aspect, community based work was something to be considered as currently, our focus was seen to be aimed at the top income bracket. Another consideration was for previously disadvantaged individuals to be on the Council and represent us on the Board of the Department of Health. Adele Taljaard also suggested we approach the medical aids through the Department of Health once we had a more favourable response from the HPCSA.

We needed to remain pro-active, creative, innovative and hopeful.

WEBSITE REPORT :

Tracey Evans reminded us that the web address was: www.saant.org.za and that it went public this month. This was to be a website for the Association and as such would not be used for advertising.

It would be a portal for Council to keep members informed of legal and other matters and have a list of Provisional Members available. Details of events could be posted as well, however, she pointed out that this did not necessarily mean that the Association endorsed the events per se, merely passed on the information.

The advantage of the website was that most of the information would be available and thus cut down the need for time consuming email enquiries. Details on how to join, together with membership forms were all available. It portrayed a professional image which was important if we wanted to be taken seriously by the public and other health professionals. It was therefore also important to keep it active.

It was also a valuable marketing tool and the public would be able to use it to find a Nutritional Therapist in their area.

TREASURER'S REPORT:

Sara Bilbe reported that we currently had 19 paid up members and that the income figure was R4 050 and the expenditure was R1 582. The figures for the rest of the year after the AGM were expected to be: R4 687 - income and R3 055 - expenditure.

Expenses were expected to increase in the future with salaries amongst other things. The bank account was currently registered in her name as in order to apply to be registered as a non-profit organisation, you needed to have a constitution first and then the names of the office bearers and once this was submitted, it would take about 2 to 3 months to get a bank account. It was then necessary to get the relevant signatories to the bank and open the account.

Finance was needed for brochures, national marketing, public relations, administrative and affiliated costs. An increase of 10% on the membership fees was proposed, to be effective from 1 January 2008. The current fees were as follows: R200 for Professional, R150 for Provisional, R100 for Affiliate and R100 for Student membership. The application fee would remain unchanged at R100.

The proposed increase was accepted.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:

Certificates for Professional Members would only be issued once a member qualified for this, however, it was agreed that Provisional Members could say that they belonged to SAANT on their stationery.

All Therapists were required to have Professional Indemnity and Public Liability Insurance.

A list of members would be on the website.

We are not allowed to call ourselves Clinical Nutritionists.

Should we fail in our application to register with the HPCSA, we would consider applying to the AHPCSA.

The Nutrition Society, headed by Rina Swart, was merely a society and not a regulatory body.

Nutritionists do more research work and no clinical practise.

There was plenty opportunity to do community work in schools.

Donations would be welcome to supplement the membership fees.

As an added income possibility, Tracey suggested running a commercial site to run parallel with our website, where businesses could advertise.

Adele suggested a register of all health products in South Africa with a link to our website to help generate income.

A suggestion was made of running forums/seminars for the public to bring in extra funds.

Comments on the new junk food laws could be made on the site doh.gov.co.za.

NOMINATIONS FOR COUNCIL FOR 2007 / 2008:

NOMINEE	PROPOSER	SECONDER
Helen Hull	Adele Pelteret	Margaret Ellis
Sara Bilbe	Helen Hull	Heidi du Preez
Tracey Evans	Helen Hull	Janine Dobson
Nicola Zaina	Helen Hull	Mike Purvis
Adele Pelteret	Helen Hull	Nicola Zaina

Beatrice Rabkin	Heidi du Preez	Sara Bilbe
Lynne Browne	Heidi du Preez	Tracey Evans
Heidi du Preez	Lynne Browne	Nicola Zaina
Gandy Madzalo	Nicola Zaina	Sara Bilbe

The nominees were unanimously accepted as the official Council Members.

Mike thanked everyone for coming and the AGM was closed.