SANC year-end message from the CEO

Dear Stakeholders,

With 2018 nearing its end, we are noting the challenges experienced in the nursing environment this year, but also the achievements and high notes that provided the necessary balance to close this year in gratitude.

This year has been marked by the induction of a new Council with a focussed strategy for the next five years. In 2019 and beyond we will work closely with Council to drive this strategy and ensure that everything we do is a value-add to our stakeholders. Our key focus areas will be around service delivery and the image of the profession and Council.

The mandate of the SANC is, and remains, to be the regulator of the nursing profession and this will become the main focus of all our efforts during 2019 and beyond.

Thank you for your support during 2018. We wish you all the best over the festive season, please be safe and may you experience peace and rest over the holidays.

Yours sincerely

Sizeni Mchunu
Registrar & CEO

Yes! The SANC eRegister must be accepted as verification in lieu of a physical APC.

The SANC has made an eRegister facility available on the SANC website, which can be utilized by employers to verify the registration status of all nurse practitioners in their employment. Employers are urged to utilise this facility in the absence of a physical Annual Practising Certificate (APC).

Visit: http://www.sanc.co.za/eRegister.aspx

Why is it important for Nurses to be on the register/roll?

In terms of the Nursing Act (Act No. 33 of 2005), registration with the South African Nursing Council is a prerequisite to practice nursing legally in the Republic of South Africa. This therefore implies that a person whose name is not in the register/roll of the South African Nursing Council cannot use the title “nurse”. Any nurse who is removed from the register and continues to practice as a nurse is guilty of an offence, and on conviction is liable to a fine or imprisonment for a period not exceeding 12 months, or to both a fine and such imprisonment.

Maintenance of Learner registration whilst on training

Learners are expected to do clinical education and training in clinical facilities/ health establishments and during this period they handle patients. Therefore they must be registered with SANC, throughout the entire duration of the programme. Section 32 (5) of the Nursing Act (Act No. 33 of 2005), stipulates that “a Health Establishment must not allow access to clinical facilities for training purposes to anyone who is not registered in terms of this Act”.

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Interview with the Registrar & CEO of the South African Nursing Council

Ms SA Mchunu

Tell us about yourself – background, family, etc.

I grew up in a humble and Christian family and community. I am the firstborn, have three siblings and I have two sons. I hold a Master’s degree in Nursing Education from the University of Zululand, which was preceded by a BA Curationis and BA Cur (Hons) from UNISA. Professionally, I am a Community Health Nurse and a Nurse Manager. While I have clinical experience in a range of areas, my passion was always in the midwifery area.

In transit towards becoming an academic, I also worked as a clinical tutor. I have lectured at the Mariannhill Nursing College and later at the University of Zululand for a combined period of eighteen years. My additional studies included the Advanced Diploma in Adult Education and Training from UNISA and the Community Development Programme from the University of Natal Institute, and these enabled me to give back to the community by spending time teaching adults (literacy and numeracy) on a voluntary basis, in Richards Bay, KwaZulu-Natal.

At the South African Nursing Council, I moved through the ranks until I became Deputy Registrar. I enjoyed the limited time during which I worked in the public sector as a Director, Nursing Education at the National Department of Health.

If you had one word to describe yourself, what would it be?

Resilient.

What do you hope to achieve in your position as CEO/Registrar of the SANC?

The wish list is long, considering the demands and peculiarities of the South African Nursing Council. However, with the support of a very able management team, I would like to assist the Council to achieve a few key things:

- To finally implement the new categories of nurses, which has been ‘a moving target’ for more than a decade, and ensure commencement of the offering of programmes towards these qualifications will be a great milestone in the history of nursing.
- To conclude our internal processes and implement a new electronic payment system, as well as implement a recently confirmed partnership with Government towards the management of the annual fees payment. This would go a long way towards reducing, if not eliminating, the reputational damage suffered by the SANC as a result of the long-outdated current payment system.
- Improved collaboration with other regulators outside South Africa, and enhancing stakeholder engagement will ensure that the nursing leadership share the same message about the different but complementary mandates of the various authorities in the nursing fraternity, which would advance the cause of nursing and restore its dignity.

What strengths do you bring to this position?

What I bring is sound clinical expertise gathered from various clinical settings, which gave me a broader appreciation of nursing practice as a basis for informed advancement in the field. I believe that my strong academic background stands me in good stead at the SANC, given its leadership role in nursing regulation. The uniqueness of the mandate and operations of the SANC makes it an educational institution in its own right. I also bring a broader understanding of the Higher Education imperatives, and solid experience in regulatory matters regarding the nursing profession.

Who is your role model?

Many people. The first is my mother who, although widowed at an early age, was strong enough to teach me that always keeping your feet on the ground and therefore being equal to all, was an essential element not only for self-preservation but for relating positively and on an equal footing to others. Professionally and academically, in that order, I was role-modelled to by two great Professors, RV Gumbi and Grace Mashaba (may their souls rest in peace). The former taught me the good of being an ethically-conscious professional and she never gave up on advocating for an ethics-based nursing profession, even in the face of varying views and behaviours. The latter, a renowned nurse educator and author of the time, confirmed my own convictions that nursing education (and research) that is not student-centred and does not ultimately translate to better patient care, is education in vain. I remain forever indebted to my teachers and mentors, Grace Mashaba (may her soul rest in peace) and Prof. Ora et labora, (work and pray) yields good life returns, even in adversity. Last but not least my mentors at McCord Hospital made me the kind of nurse that I am.

How do you approach change?

Change tends to generate anxieties amongst people. I am no different. What works for me though is being receptive to possible change and to see it as an opportunity to learn and do something new and different, while steadfastly retaining the good of the old. My experience is that while the goals may be known and well defined, change demands that one “thinks on one’s toenails” as more often than not there are unforeseen and unanticipated effects of change. Key to successful transition is communication.

What advice can you give nurses who are registered to practice in the current South Africa?

That nursing will always demand all of you as a person at any given time. That nursing is one of the few professions that gives a person the privilege and an opportunity to interact with people from all walks of life and treat them alike, when at their most vulnerable. That most reasonable people understand that as a nurse in practice, you often work under difficult and unfavourable conditions without due appreciation. Most importantly, that nursing can be the most gratifying profession if you practice with conscience, against all odds.

What book is currently on your night stand?

“The Corporate Citizen” by Mervin King

The book has a specific meaning for the current space (environment and time) for all directors, whether executive or non-executive. It all director need to acquire a solid understanding of the cardinal sins of corporate governance, as articulated by the author, and avoid the pitfalls, our country would be a better South Africa, which in turn would contribute to a better world.

When it’s all over, how do you want to be remembered?

As a God-fearing professional who loved and was protective of the nursing profession and its values, even amidst opposing pressures. I would also like to be remembered as a devoted educator, especially by those who were my students at a given time in history.

What are your hobbies?

I love reading, travelling and sports such as wrestling and rugby, especially when the Sharks are winning and when the ‘Bokke’ occasionally devour the All Blacks.
World AIDS Day takes place on the 1st December each year. It’s an opportunity for people worldwide to unite in the fight against HIV, to show support for people living with HIV, and to commemorate those who have died from an AIDS-related illness. Founded in 1988, World AIDS Day was the first ever global health day.

Why Is World AIDS Day Important?

Globally, there are an estimated 36.7 million people who have the virus. Despite the virus only being identified in 1984, more than 35 million people have died of HIV or AIDS, making it one of the most destructive pandemics in history.

Today, scientific advances have been made in HIV treatment, there are laws to protect people living with HIV and we understand so much more about the condition. Despite this, people do not know the facts about how to protect themselves and others, and stigma and discrimination remain a reality for many people living with the condition.

World AIDS Day is important because it reminds the public and government that HIV has not gone away – there is still a vital need to raise money, increase awareness, fight prejudice and improve education. This year’s theme for World AIDS Day, which marked its 30th anniversary on 1 December, was “Know your status”.

Significant progress has been made in the AIDS response since 1988, and today three in four people living with HIV know their status. But we still have miles to go, as the latest UNAIDS report shows, and that includes reaching people living with HIV who do not know their status, and ensuring that they are linked to quality care and prevention services.

HIV testing is essential for expanding treatment and ensuring that all people living with HIV can lead healthy and productive lives. It is also crucial to achieving the 90–90–90 targets and empowering people to make choices about HIV prevention so they can protect themselves and their loved ones.

Unfortunately, many barriers to HIV testing remain. Stigma and discrimination still deter people from taking an HIV test. Access to confidential HIV testing is still an issue of concern. Many people still only get tested after becoming ill and symptomatic.

The good news is that there are many new ways of expanding access to HIV testing. Self-testing, community-based testing and multi-disease testing are all helping people to know their HIV status. The SANC joined in the commemoration of World AIDS Day by issuing wristbands and/or AIDS ribbons to all staff and visitors on Friday 30 November.

Together, we can make a difference. It is your health - your right.