



# **OPTI**FORUM

AUGUST 2021 EDITION



**SAOA**

South African Optometrist Association

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# INTRODUCTION

## MESSAGE FROM THE SAOA PRESIDENT:

Our warm greetings go out to all of our colleagues in South Africa. We share this, at an unfortunate and challenging time, when our country and its people are going through yet another crisis. The unrest that has swept through the country has had a devastating effect on the practises of many of our esteemed colleagues. Additionally, the 3rd wave of the covid 19 pandemic, has resulted in the loss of beloved family members, esteemed colleagues and valued patients. May all the departed souls rest in peace, and may all of us keep safe by always adhering to regulations and safety protocols (We reference the safe practice guidelines as published by the SAOA in 2020).

The SAOA continues to drive the paradigm shift in our professions, that indeed, Optometry is More than 11001. For the past 20 years or so, gallant efforts from the previous and current Professional Boards of Optometry and Dispensing Optometry have championed the much needed and important expansion of the scope of Optometry to include Therapeutics. The SAOA has led the implementation and recognition of the full scope of practice, from clinicians in practice settings to key stakeholders. These stakeholders include Medical schemes, training Institutions, supporting Associations like OSSA, regulatory bodies such as CMS and most importantly, the Republic's authority, the National Department of Health and the respective Provincial Health Departments.

In 2020, The SAOA reviewed the procedural codes and RVUs to align them with the revised expanded full scope of Optometry. The SAOA then engaged and continues to engage, schemes, networks and regulators to have them recognize the expanded full scope. This resulted in the CMS issuing Circular 19 in March 2021 which advised all schemes to recognize and embrace the expanded scope. In our deliberations, we also orchestrated the suspension for the need of a Section 22A permit for practitioners. The SAOA also facilitated a BHF PCNS process to obtain Ocular Therapeutics Practice numbers so that schemes can differentiate the different levels of practicing. Lastly, the SAOA also led public presentations that resulted in the Essential Services Committee of the Department of Labour to classify Optometrists, Dispensing Opticians and Lab Technicians as Essential Workers.

The above continues to showcase the vigorous drive, commitment and passion that propels the SAOA in our quest to advance the Profession. Due to our relentless efforts, the embracing of the Professions by relevant stakeholders has been assured. Be that as it may, our main focus is directed at you, our valued members, to enable you to embrace the 'Optometry is more than 11001' motto and practice our scopes to the fullest. We must always remember that we are the owners of primary eye care and therefore ambassadors of the profession in our own spaces. What we do reflects on each one of us as professionals and on ALL of us collectively, as a profession. Throughout the most challenging time the world has ever seen in recent history, Optometry has continued to distinguish itself as one of the most important primary care professions in South Africa and the rest of the world. The SAOA will continue with the 'More than 11001 Webinars' and we call upon all of You to join Us in this journey and practice the full scopes of our professions today... 'Optometry is More than 11001' Stay safe and know that we provide an umbrella, to protect, to support and to assist.



**DOLLARS BOLOKA**

*President: Co-chair Private Practice*



## 2021: INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF HEALTH AND CARE WORKERS

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The World Health Organisation (WHO) designated 2021 the International Year of Health and Care Workers (IYHCW) in recognition of their dedication to providing care during and despite the COVID-19 pandemic that has challenged health systems worldwide.

Health and care workers include all those engaged in health services, public health and related areas, as well as those providing support to these activities. This varied category of workers encompasses health professionals such as doctors, nurses, midwives, pharmacists, physiotherapists, dispensing opticians and optometrists, but also allied health professionals

such as mental health workers, social care workers, occupational health workers, radiographers, laboratory workers and others.

During the 73rd World Health Assembly, Member States spoke to the critical role of health and care workers in ensuring individuals' and communities' health and well-being. Member States emphasized that the COVID-19 pandemic has illustrated why all health and care workers are critical to health emergency responses and for health system preparedness and resilience. To view the full report, [click here](#).



### OPTOMETRISTS, DISPENSING OPTICIANS AND LAB TECHNICIANS DECLARED ESSENTIAL SERVICES

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As a result of engagement between the SAOA and the Essential Services Committee (ESC), formed by the Department of Employment and Labour (DEL), public hearings were arranged in major centres around the country from 23 March to 1 April 2021 to consider Optometry as an essential services profession.

Based on the motivation by the SAOA, supported by excellent presentations by individual practitioners, all of whom are acknowledged below, the ESC accepted that impaired vision increases the risk of accidents, falls and bumps and poses a threat to the personal safety of the whole or part of the population.

In addition, based on the submissions presented, the ESC acknowledges that life threatening conditions in some instances can be detected during the comprehensive eye health examination conducted by optometrists. This results in timely referrals being made and which has the potential to save lives.

***The Panel therefore accepted that the services rendered by Optometrist, Dispensing Opticians and Laboratory Technicians (in a vision or eye care setting) are essential services.***



The SAOA, once again, takes this opportunity to thank Dr Casandra Seethal, Chairperson of the Education and Clinical Standards Committee, Past President, Mr Chris Eksteen and SAOA Honorary Life Member, Prof Paul Ramkissoon for their outstanding presentations/submissions to the ESC. The final submission was presented by the SAOA CEO and President on 1 April 2021. To view the ESC findings, [click here](#).

The categorisation of 'essential' does not only have relevance from a labour relations perspective but has other implications such as freedom of movement and opening of practices during the declared national disaster related to the Covid 19 pandemic, as Government departments refer to the DEL categorisation as their reference source.



## HPCSA DROPS CHARGES AGAINST OPTOMETRISTS FOR UNETHICAL ADVERTISING

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Correspondence received from the HPCSA confirmed that the complaint brought against all optometrists associated with PPN, has been reconsidered by a new Committee of Preliminary Inquiry for Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians, and a decision has been reached to accept the explanation of all practitioners who rejected the option of paying a fine. The Committee considers the matter finalised and is closing its file. To view the letter, which was received from the HPCSA , [click here](#).

The effect of the decision of the new Committee is that the matter is finalised and there should be no reflection of this matter as against the profiles of the various practitioners concerned.

With reference to those practitioners who chose to pay the fine when given the option to do so, it is not clear, at this time, whether those fines will be refunded by the HPCSA, and we will continue to liaise with them in this regard and provide further information when we have it.



## CMS REQUESTS ALL MEDICAL SCHEMES TO ACCOMMODATE EXPANDED OPTOMETRY SCOPE

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On 23 March 2021, the Council for Medical Schemes published its Circular 19 relating to the Inappropriate rejection of or short payment of optometry claims by medical schemes, relating to the expanded scope of practice for optometry . The CMS urged all stakeholders (medical schemes, administrators, managed care organisations and clearing houses/ switches), to ensure that their processes, systems, policies, etc. are aligned to these changes where appropriate.

The circular was the result of concerns and dissatisfaction brought to the attention of the CMS by the SAOA, supported by SAOA members, that the expanded scope was not being respected / accommodated by certain schemes. To view the Circular, [click here](#).



## CERTIFICATE OF NEED

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On **15 June 2021**, the Minister of Health published draft regulations in the Government Gazette ,pertaining to the Certificate of Need which affects all health establishments and agencies. In essence, the Certificate of Need is a licence which permits health practitioners to operate in a given location.

Interestingly, on **21 March 2014**, the President at the time, Jacob Zuma, signed a proclamation which brought certain sections of the National Health Act into force as of 1 April 2014. These sections collectively criminalised the provision of health services without a properly issued “certificate of need”. On **27 January** , however, the Constitutional Court handed down judgment in a direct application to declare invalid the proclamation of the President. The Court found that the issuing of the proclamation had led to an untenable and unintended situation that could inhibit or discourage health care practitioners from providing essential services. Accordingly, the proclamation was set aside.

Nevertheless, all interested parties are, once again invited to respond to the draft Regulations by 15 July 2021. The SAOA is in the process of engaging all relevant stakeholders and will be submitting a comprehensive response within the stipulated time frame. To view the published draft Regulations, [click here](#).

## RANDOM CPD AUDITS BY HPCSA – NO LONGER

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It is now mandatory to update your CPD status via the HPCSA portal.

The HPCSA are no longer accepting CPD certificates by e-mail as they have migrated to a new CPD system/online portal. Practitioners are now required to upload their CPD certificates individually via the HPCSA portal in order to update their CPD status. A manual has been developed to guide practitioners accordingly.

To view the manual, [click here](#).

**NB:** Practitioners were to upload their certificates for the past 24 months by 30 April 2021.



## SAOA ACTIVITIES

### SAOA ALERTS THE PUBLIC TO THE DANGERS OF PURCHASING READY MADE AND ADJUSTABLE READERS WITHOUT THE ADVICE OF A REGISTERED OPTOMETRIST

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The high volume of cases, and consequent scale of disability and economic impact caused by uncorrected refractive error (URE) has led to various attempts to provide short-cut refractive care. Ready-made readers and self-adjustable spectacles have been promoted by several companies and organizations as a potential solution,

The SAOA recognises the good intentions behind these short-cuts and spectacle technology in some cases but advises members of the public and other parties engaged in promoting eye health that they should exercise extreme caution with or avoid adjustable spectacles at this time. To view the media release disseminated by the SAOA, [click here](#).

### SAOA CODES 2021

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The SAOA has been the custodian of the tariff codes for the past 40 (fort) years which are regarded by the vast majority of stakeholders as the gold standard. The SAOA is the custodian and 'owner' of the SAOA coding structure which represents a passport for optometrists to claim from medical schemes for professional services rendered and materials provided.

#### SAOA Private Practice/Coding Committee:

**Marna Pieterse**  
Acting Chairperson

**Nivien Subramany**  
Chairperson Elect

**Sandy Govender**  
Private Practice Chairperson

**Dollars Boloka**  
Private Practice Chairperson Elect

**Casandra Sesthal**  
Education and Clinical Standard  
Chairperson

**Sandra Thomas White**

**Enrique Nzula**

**John Stein**  
Consultant co-opted

**Harry Rosen**

**Lucky Nkosi**

**Audience Maluleke**

**Jeanne Wentzel**

**Ronal Ducci**



The SAOA Coding Committee, which forms part of the SAOA Private Practice portfolio, is a dedicated structure mandated to take care of the codes in terms of revision and maintenance.

Taking cognisance of developments within the profession of optometry in recent times, such as an expanded scope to include therapeutics, new procedures and equipment, etc, the SAOA embarked on an extensive process to review particularly protocols and RVU's linked to the procedural codes. The process considered the procedural codes from a holistic perspective.

The revised procedural codes as well as the product codes for 2021 were made available to all schemes and administrators as far back as October 2020 to prepare schemes for implementation as of 1 January 2021.

In accordance with its mandate, the SAOA has also engaged all relevant stakeholders, which include medical schemes, administrators and optometric networks, regarding the codes. In this regard it is the responsibility of the SAOA to make available the codes linked to protocols, standards and RVU's, where applicable, educate and advise the stakeholders regarding the codes and lobby for adoption. The SAOA is prohibited from discussing price due to existing competition laws.

It is important to note, therefore, that it is the role of the optometric networks is to negotiate contracts, benefit design and related tariffs. Should there be any queries regarding medical scheme benefits and related tariffs for 2021, SAOA members are encouraged to engage the optometric networks, accordingly.

## **SAOA AGM: 20 FEBRUARY 2021**

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The SAOA held its virtual AGM on Saturday 20 February 2021. A record 101 members in Good Standing attended the event.

The amendments to the SAOA Rules to accommodate virtual meetings of members, as proposed by the Ethics and Transformation Committee and adopted by the SAOA Board, became applicable for the AGM held via the Zoom platform in accordance with the SAOA Memorandum of Incorporation (MOI). The meeting agenda included a comprehensive President's Report presented by SAOA President Dollars Boloka, a presentation relating to the financial health of the SAOA, a minute's silence for colleagues and friends who have passed during the past year and presentation of awards for the well-deserving recipients.

Following an overview of proposed amendments to the SAOA MOI and Rules, a CPD talk entitled 'COVID 19 Vaccination: Ethical and Legal Dimensions' was expertly delivered by Advocate Ebbie Iheanyi.

Congratulations to the following award recipients:



President's Discretion Award:  
**Dr Alvin Munsamy**



Certificate of Tribute:  
**Dr Dirk Booysen**



Distinguished Service Award:  
**Prof. Tuwani Rasengane**



Honorary Life President:  
**Mr Peter Brauer**

To view the Minutes of the AGM, [click here](#).

## SAOA ENGAGEMENT WITH COUNCIL FOR MEDICAL SCHEMES

A meeting was scheduled by the SMOA was scheduled by the SMOA primarily to address a number of issues which have been impacting on the professions of optometry and dispensing opticianry which require urgent resolution in addition to matters raised in the past where feedback is yet to be received.

### Issues addressed included:

- Conduct of schemes and administrators.
- Accreditation of optometric networks
- Rejection of claims by schemes and administrators
- Therapeutics: claims and payments

To view the full report, [click here](#).



## 'MORE THAN 11001': CPD WEBINAR SERIES

The SAOA 'More than 11001' CPD Webinar Series for 2021 commenced on 20 February 2021, to coincide with the SAOA Annual General Meeting (AGM). The webinar series takes the form of multiple webinars throughout the year and which will accommodate the annual CPD requirements for optometrists and dispensing opticians.

The webinars are dedicated to topics which include 'Covid-19: 2021 & Beyond', Ethics pertaining to Billing, Dispensing, Paediatric Optometry, Contact Lenses, Neuro-Optometry, Binocular Vision, Therapeutics, Sports Vision, Dry Eye, Screenings, Low Vision, Professional Ethics, amongst others.

These Webinars are a not to be missed opportunity and provides members with the practicalities, tips as well as guidelines to address the various areas within the field of Optometry. Great thought has been given to the topics & speaker selection.

Given the NEW NORM of doing things during the pandemic the SAOA have attempted to make the registration process as user-friendly as possible and have devised a Questionnaire for completion.

To view the programme for the year and related questionnaire, [click here](#).

### WEBINAR DATES & TOPICS

Time: 18:30 - 20:30

#### DISPENSING BASICS AND ADVANCED DISPENSING TROUBLESHOOTING

6 May 2021

#### OCULAR DIAGNOSTIC EXAMINATION

20 May 2021

#### OCULAR THERAPEUTICS

10 June 2021

#### DRY EYE PROCEDURES

24 June 2021

#### INFANT, TODDLER & PRESCHOOL VISION AND EYE HEALTH EXAMINATION

1 July 2021

#### ORTHODIDACTIC READING SKILLS + LEARNING RELATED VISION DISORDER EXAMINATION

22 July 2021

#### MYOPIA MANAGEMENT

5 August 2021

#### SCHOOL VISION AND EYE HEALTH EXAMINATION

19 August 2021

#### NON STRABISMIC & STRABISMIC BINOCULAR VISION EXAMINATION

2 September 2021

#### NEURO-OPTOMETRIC EXAMINATION + EYE RELATED NEUROLOGICAL CONDITIONS AND MANAGEMENT

7 October 2021

#### CONTACT LENS BASIC EXAMINATION + CONTACT LENS COMPLEX

21 October 2021

#### CONTACT LENS ADVANCED + CONTACT LENS THERAPEUTIC

11 November 2021

#### LOW AND SPORTS VISION EVALUATION

21 November 2021

#### ETHICS IN OPTOMETRIC PRACTICE

2 December 2021

## MORE THAN 11001

OPTOMETRY & OPTICAL DISPENSING  
FOCUSED EVENT



Earn a total of  
**30 CPD points for**  
this series





## AMALGAMATED HEALTH ASSOCIATIONS ADVOCACY (AHAA) GROUP

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The SAOA has joined forces with a number of other health care disciplines which includes General Practitioners and primary care professions such as physiotherapists, biokineticists, podiatrists, occupational therapists, audiologists, amongst others.

The Group was formed primarily to ensure that practitioners who practice outside the hospital setting will receive equitable consideration regarding the roll out of the Covid 19 vaccinations.

AHAA are affiliated to 'Vaccines 4 Healthcare workers (V4HCW)' set up in collaboration with the National Department of Health.

V4HCW have created an information hub for all HCW's to access the latest SA data on COVID vaccines. This platform allows for quick and easy updates and it is simple to navigate through the directory of vaccination topics and documents.

[Click here](#) to access this information hub.



## SECTION 59 INVESTIGATION INTERIM REPORT: SAOA POSITION

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The SAOA participated in the section 59 Investigation by presenting an official position at the public hearings. The primary reason was to bring unfairness and injustices, in general, to the fore.

The SAOA has thus waited in anticipation for the report of the Section 59 Investigation, not only because of our involvement, but because of the relevance to practicing optometrists and dispensing opticians and the upholding of their rights.

The Interim Report has now been received, the

content of which has been noted. To view the report, [click here](#).

The official response from the SAOA highlights the fact that the SAOA does not condone fraud, wastage and/or abuse in any shape or form. The SAOA, however, supports the rights of practitioners in terms of exercising their professional discretion in the rendering of services to patients and their right to reply to allegations, where applicable.

To view the full SAOA Position, [click here](#).

## CMS DECLARES CLOSED DSPS AND PENALTY CO-PAYS AS UNDESIRABLE BUSINESS PRACTICES

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For the past 4 years, the Independent Community Pharmacists Association (ICPA) have opposed the conduct of medical schemes relating to the methods employed by schemes regarding the selection of Designated Service Providers (DSP's) and the unfair imposition of high co-payments should patients wish to purchase their medicines from a non-DSP pharmacy.

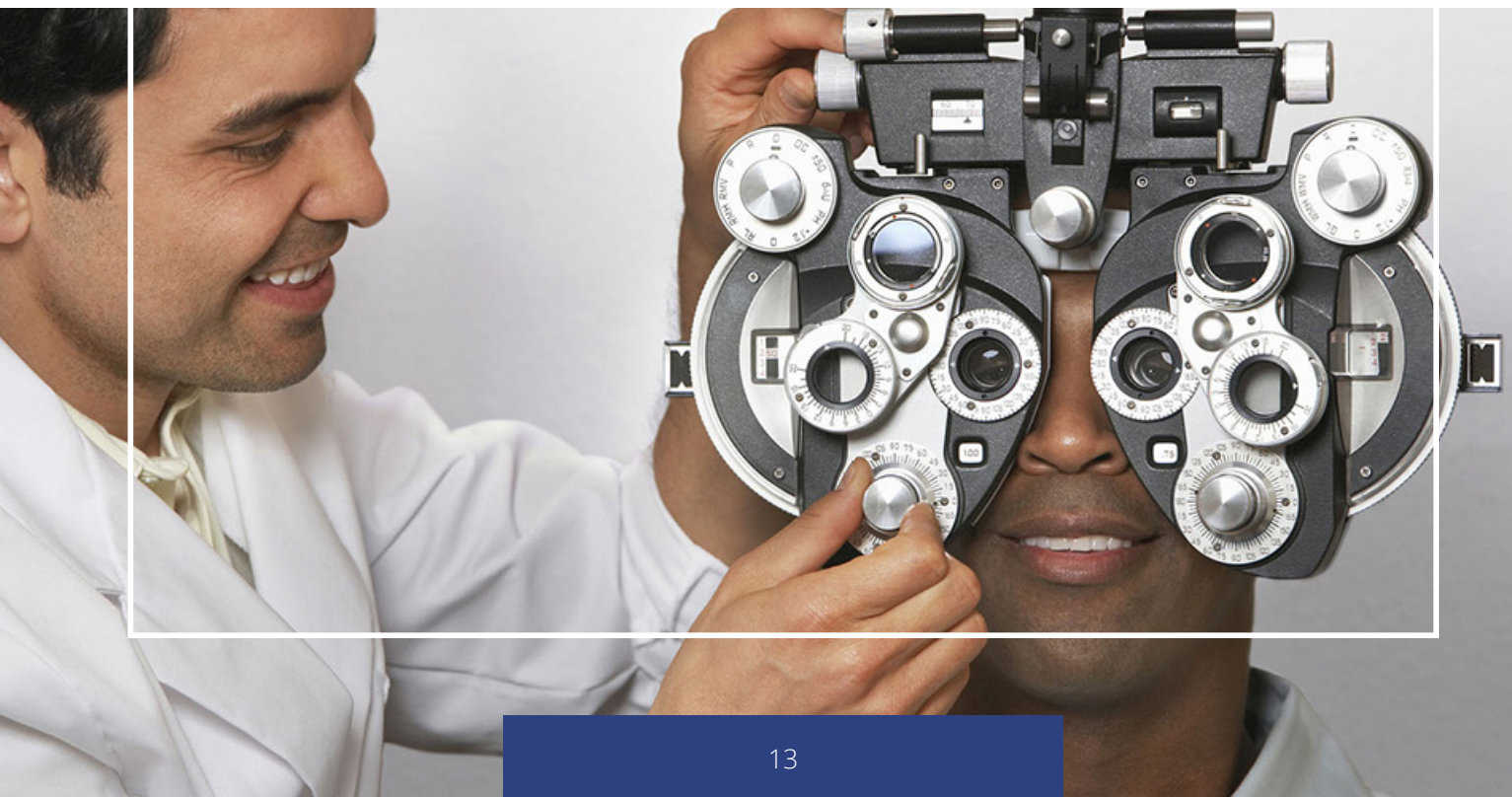
The Council for Medical Schemes (CMS) has now banned the imposition of excessive co-payments on patients who choose health-care providers outside the designated service providers (DSPs) chosen by their medical schemes..

While the move has implications across the private health-care sector, including optometry and dispensing opticianry, it will bring particular relief to independent pharmacies shut out of these networks. Medical schemes have used DSPs to help manage costs, but have drawn criticism for steering patients to courier and retail pharmacy chains at the expense of independent pharmacies.

Some schemes have also drawn fire for levying stiff penalties of up to 40% of the total cost of a prescription on members who opt to use pharmacies that do not belong to a DSP, according to the Independent Community Pharmacy Association.

In a Government Gazette notice on April 23, the CMS declared two business practices as undesirable in terms of the Medical Schemes Act. With immediate effect, it bans schemes from levying penalties greater than the difference between the rate charged by a health-care provider belonging to their approved network and one that does not. It also prohibits the appointment of a DSP without engaging in a procurement process that is "fair, equitable, transparent, competitive and cost-effective".

The CMS is to publish guidelines pertaining to the selection of DSPs by medical schemes as well as co-payment arrangements. To view the published declaration, [click here](#).



## FINAL TRIBUTES TO DEPARTED COLLEAGUES



**ANNALIZE BOOYSEN**



**PETER HEINRICH**



**BELINNA TSELANA  
KOMATI**



**TANIA MMOTLANA**



**ANDRE OPPERMAN**



**ABDULLAH SAYED**



## FRAUD, WASTE AND ABUSE (FWA) WEBINAR

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The Council for Medical Schemes hosted a webinar dedicated to FWA on 11 and 18 March 2021, in collaboration with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA). The SAOA attended the event.

### The following points are to be noted:

- The necessity for a National Coding Regulator to ensure uniformity across all health disciplines
- The need for all medical schemes to have standardised guidelines and protocols.
- The necessity to review contracts between practitioners and Designated Service Providers (DSP's), based on evidence and concerns that

providers are being bullied and scheme members are denied access.

- The Special Investigation Unit (SIU) Tribunal to address FWA in collaboration with the CMS.
- Improved collaboration between regulatory bodies.
- Entities within the health care arena are not regulated, such as the private hospitals.
- The voice of scheme members to have greater relevance.

A comprehensive report with access to the webinar presentations will be made available to SAOA members in due course.

## LEGAL AND ETHICAL

### ONLINE LEGAL ASSISTANCE: NEW SAOA MEMBERSHIP BENEFIT

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SAOA Members in Good Standing now have access, to an online legal assistance service, through the CFP Brokers' medical malpractice insurance policy, with immediate effect. This service is free and is an automatic value-add-on provided by the indemnity insurance policy.

### WHAT YOU GET

**Each policy holder has access to the following as per policy period:**

- An unlimited 24/7 facility for telephonic advice and assistance.
- A face-to-face consultation with a qualified attorney.
- Up to three letters, matter and complexity dependent.
- A follow-up consultation.

To view a comprehensive overview of this benefit, [click here](#).



## POPIA: PROTECTING YOUR PERSONAL INFORMATION

### POPIA: INFORMED CONSENT

Section 14 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, provides that everyone has the right to privacy. The Protection of Personal Information Act, 4 of 2013 (POPI), which came into effect as of 1 July 2021, reiterates that the right to privacy includes a right to protection against the negligent and/or unlawful collection, retention, dissemination and use of personal information.

Of particular relevance, in accordance with POPI, the South African Optometric Association (SAOA), as a Responsible Party, has a legal obligation to obtain permission to process certain Personal Information (PI) owned by you, our valued member and the 'Data Subject'; the remainder would be processed in terms of the contractual agreement between the SAOA and yourself. Furthermore, in terms of Section 18 of POPI, the SAOA is also obliged to provide the Data Subject with specified information when collecting personal information from you. Consent forms have been disseminated to members requesting your consent to process your information in accordance with POPIA; it would be greatly appreciated if members would sign and return the consent forms to [popi21@saoa.co.za](mailto:popi21@saoa.co.za).

To view the consent forms, [click here](#).

### PROTECTION OF PERSONAL INFORMATION ACT (POPI) SECTION 19 – OBLIGATIONS OF RESPONSIBLE PARTIES

Members are reminded that responsible parties (recipients of personal information) have a grace period until 30 June 2021 to implement measures to protect and safeguard personal information and become fully POPI compliant.

POPIA requires all responsible parties, relating to personal information in their possession or under their control, to:

- a) secure the integrity and confidentiality of the personal information.
- b) take appropriate, reasonable technical and organisational measures to prevent the loss of, or damage to the personal information.
- c) prevent unlawful access to, and unauthorised processing or destruction of the personal information.
- d) identify internal and external risks to the personal information.
- e) establish and maintain appropriate safeguards against losing or damaging personal information.
- f) regularly verify the safeguards; and ensure that the safeguards are continually updated.

A POPI checklist will accompany the next News Flash.

### SAOA POPI PACK

To ensure that SAOA members are well equipped to accommodate the requirements of the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPI) by 30 June 2021, a pack of relevant documents have been drafted in collaboration with senior legal counsel.

The pack comprises the following:

- Copy of the POPI Training Webinar slides as presented by Advocates Judith and Pieter Griessel on 2 June 2021.
- Link to the POPI Training Webinar recording.
- Operator Agreement template
- Human Resources Policy document
- Privacy Notice template
- Patient Registration template
- Patient consent form
- Addendum to the Employment contract
- Promotion of Access to Information Act (PAIA) manual – template.

We trust that our members have found the pack to be helpful.

## POPIA - THE NECESSITY FOR AN INCIDENT RESPONSE PLAN

Although data breaches are nothing new, this topic has received more focus recently with stricter data protection laws and regulations. It is more important than ever that practices and businesses prepare for such an occurrence and have formal procedures and protocols in place to deal with the fallout.

- Do you have an Incident Response Plan in place to deal with data breaches or security compromises of personal information in your organisation?
- Do your employees know what to do if they mistakenly send a confidential email to the wrong recipient, or click on a phishing email?
- Do you have operational contingencies in place to ensure continuity if your systems are hijacked in a ransomware attack?
- Do you know what the legal notifications and reporting requirements are?

As anyone involved in data security will tell you - it is not a matter of IF, but WHEN.  
To view the full article, [click here](#).

## ACCURATE MEDICAL RECORD KEEPING 'NOT TO BE UNDERESTIMATED'

The importance of accurate medical record keeping cannot be underestimated for its vital role in providing evidence in medical malpractice litigation. Of interest was a study on medical record keeping, cited during a recent webinar, which revealed the following points as barriers to accuracy:

- 76% of practitioners said that it was too time-consuming to make comprehensive notes.
- 51% said they were too busy.
- 18% said they lacked computer skills.
- 41% said they kept records in a particular manner as a matter of habit and it worked for them.
- 8% said they believed it unlikely that they would receive a complaint or claim against them.
- 33% said that they lacked the requisite training for accurate medical record keeping.

To view the full article, [click here](#).

## WHEN CAN I REFER TO MYSELF AS A SPECIALIST?

The Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) recently touched on the difference between a generalist and a specialist, considering that there are healthcare practitioners who hold themselves out to be specialists, when they, in fact, are not. Practitioners who have a special interest or experience in a particular field or type of procedure may be contravening the law if they refer to themselves a specialist without any further qualifications. For further details, [click here](#).





## NEW MINIMUM WAGE AND EARNINGS THRESHOLD

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As from 1 March 2021, the National Minimum Wage will be increased to R21,69 p/h, including farm workers this time around. Domestic workers are still slightly less at R19,09 p/h. New tables of the Contract Cleaning and Wholesale and Retail sectors have also been published, as well as new learnership allowances.

The earnings threshold has also been increased for the first time since July 2014 - this is what is sometimes referred to as the 'overtime limit'. The new earnings threshold is R211,596.30 per year (previously R205,533.33) as from 1 March 2021. ([Download it here.](#))

Employees who earn in excess of this threshold are excluded from the protection offered by the BCEA in terms of sections 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17(2) and 18(3), which include provisions for overtime payment when working more than 45 hours per week, compulsory breaks and rest periods, night work allowances, etc..

The increase in the threshold therefore means that some employees who earn more than R205,533 but less than R211,596 per year (excluding those categories in s6(1) of the BCEA), may from 1 March be entitled to overtime payment and these other protections. Employers should check their payroll details to identify such employees and make adjustments if necessary

## SAOA MEMBERSHIP

### NOTICE BOARDS FOR MEMBERS IN GOOD STANDING

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The SAOA Board, once again, wishes to assure our Members in Good Standing that the SAOA is committed to focus on your interests, collectively and, where possible, individually. The SAOA, although having shown some leniency in recent times, will no longer be able to provide assistance to non-members or members Not in Good Standing.

**To this end, the SAOA is to set up 'Notice Board' WhatsApp Groups to comprise only of SAOA members in Good Standing with the sole purpose of disseminating relevant announcements, information and updates on a non-participative basis.**

All potential members, however, will be directed to our membership division, where a quick filling in of an application form will lead to immediate benefits. We, once again, thank all our Members in Good Standing for your continued support.

To view our Membership Benefits, [click here.](#)



## INDEMNITY INSURANCE COVER 2021

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For those SAOA members who have not renewed their cover for 2021, this could have serious implications on any retroactive cover and could result in a claim if the matter is not rectified as soon as possible. A dedicated email address has been created for SAOA members - [insurance-saoa@cfpbrokers.co.za](mailto:insurance-saoa@cfpbrokers.co.za).

Members can access all relevant information regarding indemnity insurance including the premiums for 2021. As a reminder, please note:

- For 2021, members are to be individually invoiced by the insurance brokers, CFP Brokers, who are authorised financial service providers.
- The comprehensive cover provided at reduced rates remains a benefit only for SAOA members in good standing
- SAOA membership fees for the 2020/2021 financial period were reduced to accommodate the indemnity cover premium (there was no increase in membership fee for 2021).

Should you have any further queries, please contact Lauren on [lauren@cfpbrokers.co.za](mailto:lauren@cfpbrokers.co.za).

## STATE-EMPLOYED PRACTITIONERS: INDEMNITY LIMITATIONS

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Although State-employed medical practitioners have indemnity against legal claims, this is not an absolute protection. As well as indemnity being forfeited in some situations, they are also not protected against complaints to the Health Professions Council of SA, nor in criminal actions. To read the full article, [click here](#).

## CYBERCRIME

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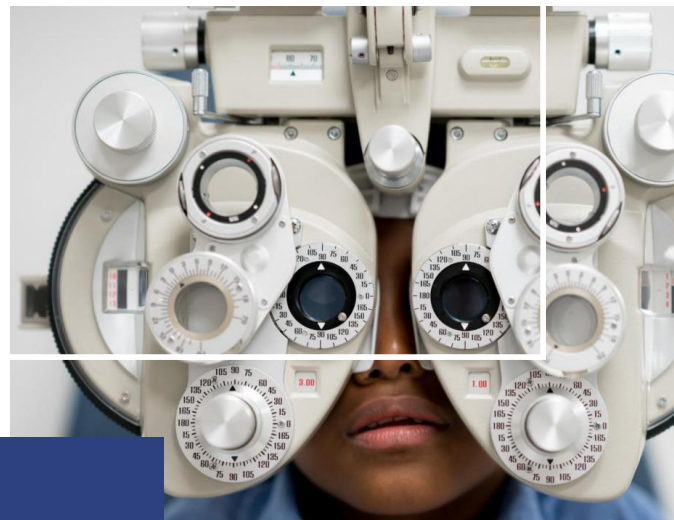
The incidence of cybercrime has escalated in recent times. The SAOA thus wishes to draw to the attention of our members a letter from the US White House to business leaders.

The letter outlines what businesses can do to protect themselves against the threat of ransomware. Members are advised to verify communications and bank details telephonically rather than rely only on email communications. To read the White House Letter, [click here](#).

Please note that the SAOA is in the process of negotiating Cyber Insurance on behalf of our members.

In the meantime, to avoid reading through reams of articles and documents pertaining to cyber insurance, refer below links to two short videos on the subject:

**CORPORATE**  
**MEDICAL**



## SAOA AND PPS CELEBRATE NEW PARTNERSHIP

We are proud to announce a new partnership with the Professional Provident Society (PPS). Founded by a group of dental practitioners more than 80 years ago, PPS has become the home for graduate professionals providing tailor-made insurance, investment and healthcare solutions to members. Our partnership with PPS will enable us to continue our contribution towards improving the lives of professionals as a collective society.

Our partnership will formally commence in August 2021, where we will collaborate to deliver various digital initiatives such as webinars, roadshows and joint thought leadership sessions supporting the **"More than 11001"** motto.

As a clear endorsement of the partnership, we have invited PPS to provide holistic financial advice and wellness solutions to our members across various areas of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and will include:

- (1) Intra & Interpersonal Skills Training,
- (2) Leadership Training,
- (3) Cultural & Behavioural Skills Training,
- (4) Personal Financial Planning,
- (5) Business Risk & Succession Planning,
- (6) Professional Indemnity and Medical Aid.

Together with PPS, we will be facilitating various discussions to have them extend their value offering by providing individual financial coaching sessions to members.

*"From my tenure at PPS, I immediately started to fall in love with the business's internal capability (people, advice philosophy, underwriting etc.) and desire to craft and deliver insanely great, imaginative, next-generation products and solutions. In supporting the core outcomes of SAOA through this bespoke offering, it is without a doubt that I believe this collaborative effort will live true to our purpose of helping graduate professionals live the lives they deserve to live."*  
– says Mzwandile Mtshali, Executive: Advisory Services & Enablement at PPS.

PPS is a licensed insurer and authorised financial services provider



FOR PROFESSIONALS  
SINCE 1941



## EYE CARE OBSERVANCES

### SAOA OFFICIAL DECLARATION: INTERNATIONAL MYOPIA AWARENESS WEEK: 13 - 19 May 2021

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We joined the world, as the SAOA, in celebrating Myopia Awareness Week, from 13 to 19 May 2021. Our participation and involvement are underpinned by the acknowledgment of our responsibility as primary eye care providers in the Republic of South Africa and the continent of Mother Africa.

The prevalence of myopia and high myopia is on the rise throughout the world. It is estimated that by 2050, 5 (five) billion people will be myopic, representing 50% of the world's population.

To view the official SAOA Declaration, [click here](#).



### WORLD COUNCIL OF OPTOMETRY PASSES RESOLUTION CALLING FOR A STANDARD OF CARE FOR MYOPIA MANAGEMENT

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Furthering its commitment to address the global epidemic of childhood myopia, the World Council of Optometry (WCO) Board of Directors unanimously approved a resolution advising optometrists to incorporate a standard of care for myopia management within their practices.

"Myopia is increasing at an alarming rate, as are the risks for vision impairment associated with the condition. With more than five billion people projected to be affected by myopia by 2050, the global optometric community must increase its efforts to combat this public health issue," said Paul Folkesson, president, World Council of Optometry. "

The resolution defines the evidence-based standard of care as comprising of three main components:

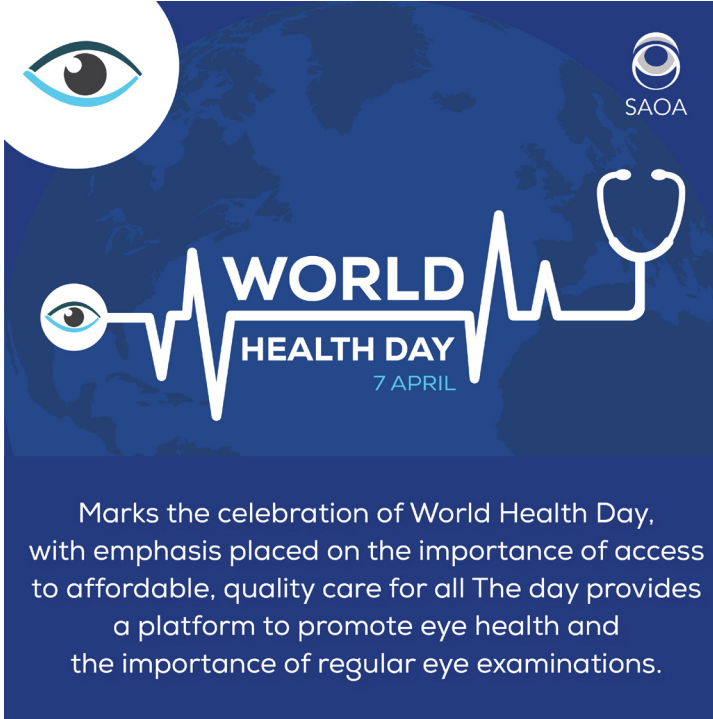
- Mitigation - optometrists educating and counselling parents and children, during early and regular eye exams, on lifestyle, dietary, and other factors to prevent or delay the onset of myopia.
- Measurement - optometrists evaluating the status of a patient during regular comprehensive vision and eye health exams, such as measuring refractive error and axial length whenever possible.
- Management - optometrists addressing patients' needs of today by correcting myopia, while also providing evidence-based interventions (e.g., contact lenses, spectacles, pharmaceuticals) that slow the progression of myopia, for improved quality of life and better eye health today and into the future.

To view the declaration, [click here](#).

## WORLD HEALTH DAY: 7 APRIL 2021

April 7 of each year marks the celebration of World Health Day. From its inception at the First Health Assembly in 1948 and since taking effect in 1950, the celebration has aimed to create awareness of a specific health theme to highlight a priority area of concern for the World Health Organization.


Over the past 70 years this has brought to light important health issues such as eye and vision health mental health, maternal and childcare, and climate change. The celebration is marked by activities which extend beyond the day itself and serves as an opportunity to focus worldwide attention on these important aspects of global health. From the SAOA perspective, World Health Day, once again provides a platform to promote eye health and the importance of regular eye examinations.

A graphic for World Health Day 7 April 2021. It features a blue background with a white outline of a human eye on the left, a white heartbeat line across the middle, and a white stethoscope on the right. The text 'WORLD HEALTH DAY' is in large white letters, with '7 APRIL' in smaller white letters below it. The SAOA logo is in the top right corner.

Marks the celebration of World Health Day, with emphasis placed on the importance of access to affordable, quality care for all. The day provides a platform to promote eye health and the importance of regular eye examinations.

## WORLD OPTOMETRY WEEK: 26 - 30 MARCH 2021

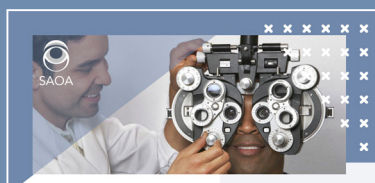
Most members of the public take for granted the gift of sight, let alone the dedicated professionals who assume responsibility for caring for their eyes. We try to show our appreciation to our optometrists every day, but 23 March is dedicated to them as World Optometry Day! Not to mention that March 26th-30th is World Optometry Week! To view the history behind World Optometry Day and World Optometry Week, [click here](#).

A banner for World Optometry Week featuring a collage of diverse people wearing glasses.

**WORLD OPTOMETRY WEEK**  
26 - 30 March

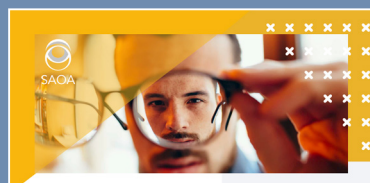
**DID YOU KNOW?**

- **253** million people are visually impaired.
- **84%** of visual impairment results from chronic eye diseases.
- **81%** of visual impairment could be avoided if diagnosed and treated early.

A banner for World Optometry Week featuring an optometrist examining a patient's eyes with a phoropter.

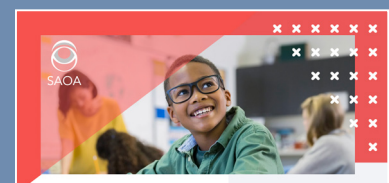
**WORLD OPTOMETRY WEEK**  
26 - 30 March

**Protect your sight:** Early detection and treatment of vision threatening eye diseases such as: glaucoma, macular degeneration, cataracts, diabetic retinopathy. Don't delay consulting your optometrist or doctor when you experience symptoms like red eyes, eye allergies, dry eyes, eye swelling & eye pain.

A banner for World Optometry Week featuring a close-up of a person's face wearing glasses.

**WORLD OPTOMETRY WEEK**  
26 - 30 March

By 2050, half the world's population – a staggering **five billion** people – are expected to be short-sighted.

A banner for World Optometry Week featuring a young boy smiling and wearing glasses.

**WORLD OPTOMETRY WEEK**  
26 - 30 March

The **World Health Organization** (WHO) estimates 19 million children less than 15 years of age are visually impaired; of those, 12 million are impaired due to uncorrected refractive errors and amblyopia.

## GLAUCOMA WEEK: 14 - 21 MARCH 2021


Glaucoma is commonly known as the 'sneak thief of sight' because it can cause irreversible vision loss without any obvious symptoms. Up to 50% of all people with glaucoma are not even aware they have the condition.

However, if it is diagnosed early, glaucoma treatment can begin, and vision loss can be prevented.

The SAOA embarked on an extensive awareness campaign during the week which included:


- Media releases
- Radio Interviews
- Social Media posts

To view media release disseminated for public consumption, [click here](#).




### WHAT IS GLAUCOMA?

An **eye disease** of the optic nerve that causes the inability of the eye to withstand high pressure. The optic nerve carries images from the retina, which is the specialized light sensing tissue, to the brain so we can see.



GLAUCOMA AWARENESS  
WEEK 2021



### WHO ARE AT RISK?


Although glaucoma primarily affects the middle-aged and the elderly, it can affect people of all ages. Those at **higher risk** include people of African, Asian, and Hispanic descent.

**Other high-risk groups include:**

- People over 60
- Family members of those already diagnosed
- Diabetics
- People who are severely near-sighted.




GLAUCOMA AWARENESS  
WEEK 2021




### TYPES OF GLAUCOMA:

**Open-angle glaucoma** (the most common form) - The optic nerve damage and peripheral vision loss usually occurs so gradually and painlessly that you are not aware until the optic nerve is already badly damaged.

**Angle-closure glaucoma** - The drainage angle of the eye narrows and becomes completely blocked. When this happens and pressure builds up, it causes symptoms that include severe **eye pain**, **blurred vision**, **headaches**, **rainbow-halos around lights**, **nausea and vomiting**. In acute cases, **blindness** can result.



GLAUCOMA AWARENESS  
WEEK 2021



### TREATMENT:

There is **no cure** for Glaucoma. However, medication or surgery can slow or prevent further vision loss. The appropriate treatment depends upon the type of Glaucoma among other factors.




GLAUCOMA AWARENESS  
WEEK 2021





### HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOU HAVE GLAUCOMA?

**Early detection** is vital to stopping or slowing down the progress of the disease. We encourage regular comprehensive eye examinations that includes screening for eye diseases. Such examinations are especially important for those at higher risk and may help to prevent vision loss.




GLAUCOMA AWARENESS  
WEEK 2021




### WHAT HAPPENS IN THE EYE OF A PERSON WITH GLAUCOMA?

Raised eye pressure plays a role in damaging the delicate nerve fibres of the optic nerve. When a significant number of nerve fibres are damaged, **"blind spots"** develop in the field of vision. Once optic nerve damage and visual loss from Glaucoma occurs, it is **permanent**. Most people do not notice these blind areas until much of the optic nerve damage has already occurred. If the entire nerve is destroyed, **blindness** results.



GLAUCOMA AWARENESS  
WEEK 2021





### CLASSIFICATION OF VISUALLY IMPAIRED BOWLERS

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A comprehensive document relating to the visual classification of visually impaired bowlers, authored by esteemed South African optometrists ,Hazel Sacharowitz and Brian Sneag, has been made available as a reference source to key stakeholders, locally and internationally, including the SAOA. The document encompasses relevant sections such as important notes to assessors, guidelines for acuity testing, recording charts, the classification form, amongst others. To view the full document, [click here](#).

### DISPENSING IS A PROFESSIONAL PROCEDURE

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During the course of 2020, the SAOA Coding Committee embarked on a process to review all optometry related procedures and protocols, taking cognisance of key factors such as time, degrees of skill and complexity, judgement, etc.

Needless to say, Dispensing is an essential part of the eye care service which takes time and requires expertise and skill.

In accordance with the theme, 'More than 11001', the entitlement of practitioners to charge for Dispensing has been incorporated within the SAOA Procedural Coding structure as a separate, stand-alone procedure , divorced from the comprehensive eye examination.

As stated above, the SAOA is prohibited from being involved in price related discussion due to existing competition laws. Suffice to say, however, that the intent of providing a platform for practitioners to charge for professional time and expertise (eg dispensing), is not to compromise other areas of professional practice such as materials.

The principle of a dispensing fee has been presented to all schemes and administrators. Of course, there will be schemes which accept the principle and will pay the dispensing fee, and others which accept the principle but will not pay at this time (patient to pay). We will keep members updated regarding progress made in this regard.



## SAOA SHOP

### PATIENT FRIENDLY EDUCATIONAL LEAFLETS

Based on repeated requests from members, please note that patient-friendly educational pamphlets are now in stock which are available to Members in Good Standing at low cost. Over the years, such pamphlets have proven to be a valuable assistance to practitioners in terms of patients' eye health education and awareness. The pamphlets currently in stock, include:

- Digital Devices
- Dry Eye
- Spectacle Care
- Vision Conditions
- Drivers Guide to Vision

The pamphlets are available in packs of 50, costed as follows:

**SAOA Members:** R65-00 per pack.

**Non-members:** R140-00 per pack

To view samples of the pamphlets and access the order form, [click here](#).



## SAOA BOARD OF DIRECTORS



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**Marna Pieterse**  
Vice President: Special Projects



**Casandra Seethal**  
Education & Clinical Standards



**Emmah Mahlangu**  
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**Nivien Subramany**  
Finance Director

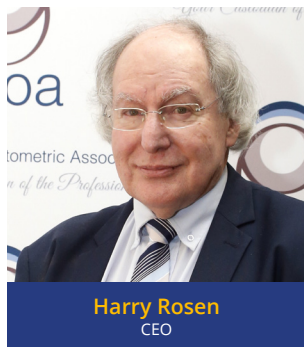


**Leané Cilliers**  
Membership and Marketing



**Sandy Govender**  
Private Practice

## TEAM SAOA (STAFF)



## CONCLUSIONS

### **'RESILIENCE' IS THE WORD FOR 2021**

Resilience is the word to characterise 2021 because it implies hope, faith and possibilities.

The Oxford Dictionary defines **Resilience** as 'the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties, toughness. The ability of a substance or object to spring back into shape; elasticity.' It's that quality that allows us to overcome challenges, obstacles, hardship and adversity, instead of being defeated by them. Unlike quarantine and coronavirus and social distancing, resilience is the only one that's going to be just as relevant when the pandemic is over. Resilience is the quality that was summoned in us by all the challenges of 2020. And it's also the quality that's going to carry us further forward into 2021.

We take this opportunity to thank our members for their ongoing and greatly appreciated support.

**STAY SAFE**





# THANKYOU

FOR YOUR CONTINUED  
SUPPORT



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