

Busy year end for COHSASA



The COHSASA "family" at the end of 2011 during year-end celebrations

The COHSASA year end is always frantic and December 2011 was no exception. The last week before we shut shop, there were many activities that required being spread even beyond the head office itself. In one space, at COHSASA HQ, there was a four-day annual update training programme for COHSASA staff and independent consultants.

At the same time, in another part of town, at Roodenberg Guest House in Rondebosch, there was a three-day meeting to flesh out a business framework for the SafeCare initiative with business management consultant, James Parker and his assistant, Ton Westenenk. The robust discussion resulted in a draft plan and "map" of operations and costing for the next few years.

During this hectic period, some staff involved in one meeting had to hot-foot it over to Pinelands to give presentations and updates on developments in standards, contracts, websites and IT. Then they dashed back to Roodenberg. A real little sweat-fest.

Both groups, however, came together for a night of rest and recreation and a huge feast and celebration in readiness for the Christmas break. Long service awards, employee of the quarter awards and thanks to visitors were

given out. Perhaps the most enjoyable part of the evening was being witness to the musical talents of the COHSASA CEO's son, Robbie Whittaker and his band Sultree, as well as the keyboard and singing prowess of the children of the Director of Research and Business Development, Professor Tobias Rinke de Wit.

These youngsters kept the party going: soulful singing by Robbie, a hypnotic exhibition of keyboard playing by 15-year-old Pepijn Rinke de Wit and silky vocals from his 17-year-old sister, Leonoor.



Christmas at Roodenberg Guest House

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(Above): From Left, Mrs Saskia Blakeway with independent surveyors Dr Elset Prinsloo and Dr Abey Marais. In the background is Quality Advisor, Mrs Edith Palmer-Harrington.



(Left): AIMS Coordinator, Mrs Petro de Beer (left), with AIMS assistant Mrs Colleen Delbridge.

(Below): Welcome Tobias... Staff at COHSASA used the end-of-the-year Christmas celebration to welcome Professor Tobias Rinke de Wit (below left), his wife Liset and their children Leonoor, Pepijn and Floris (below right) and Annabel (below centre) to Cape Town from the Netherlands and wish them a very pleasant sojourn in the Mother City.



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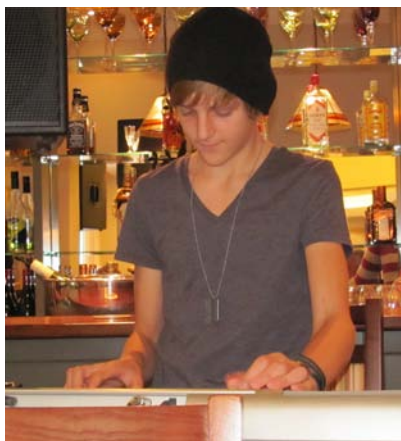


Pre-dinner drinks in the Roodenburg Guest House garden. From left: Mrs Joyce Mabaso, Dr Ziyanda Vundle, Mrs Edith Palmer-Harrington and Dr David Nzanira.



Mrs Ingrid James (above left) who received her 10-year service award for COHSASA and Mrs Elsa Wiehman who received an Employee of the 2nd Quarter Award from the CEO, Professor Whittaker. Employee of the Quarter awards for 2011 were also awarded to Ms Marilyn Keegan – Quarter 1, Dr Fikile Sithole – Quarter 3 and Mrs Phuleng Myeni – Quarter 4. Because the 2010 Employee of the Quarter awards had not yet been handed out, these too were awarded on this night. There was no award for Quarter 1; Quarter 2 award was given to Mrs Lyn Rayment, Quarter 3 to Mrs Elsa Potts and Quarter 4 to Ms Helena Tredoux.

Mr James Parker (left) and Mr Ton Westenenk who assisted in the development of a business framework for SafeCare.



Leonoor Rinke de Wit (left above) sings a haunting song while Pepijn takes the keyboard by storm.



Robbie Whittaker, leader of the soulful rock band, Sultree.

Lean and Mean...

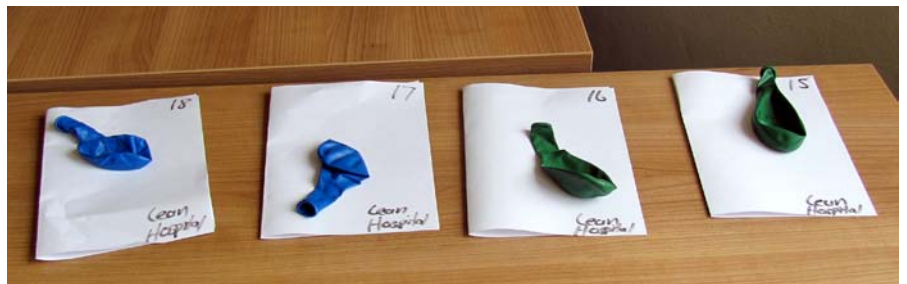


Professor Norman Faull (in the red shirt) and his assistant Lisa Mulder (in the turquoise top) with staff who participated in the Lean Institute's two-day workshop.

A group of 14 staff members were participants in a two-day workshop in January 2012 led by Professor Norman Faull and his assistant Lisa Mulder. The purpose of the workshop was to introduce the Lean method into the various sections of COHSASA to create "thinking people and to eliminate waste."

To create a more efficient organisation with less waste and smart thinking, COHSASA will gradually, over time, be adopting the working methods of the Lean Institute in the context of a possible partnership. This seems logical as COHSASA and the Lean Institute are highly complementary and both are working to improve quality.

Some of the exercises in the two-day workshop taxed even the most even-tempered....There was one exercise which involved two teams in "emergency departments" competing against each other and having to process 20 patients (balloons) who had arrived in various stages of injury from a bus crash in the shortest possible time. Beyond the fun there was a serious purpose: to get COHSASA staff to optimum performance level. However, in the funnier moments, Dr Ziyanda Vundle and Dr Giel van Schalkwyk behaved less like restrained professionals than antelope locking horns.



Balloons arrived at hospital dead on arrival (above).



Members of the group who inadvertently killed balloons during the Lean workshop. Dr Ziyanda Vundle and Mrs Paddy Clark (left); Dr Giel van Schalkwyk (right).



Department heads are now putting together flow charts of various operations and processes in their departments, identifying bottlenecks and devising plans and counter-measures to address problems.

The advantage of the Lean method is that it allows individuals themselves to experience deficiencies in a process

that requires a certain outcome.

CEO, Stuart Whittaker, will be conducting so-called gemba walks when necessary. The gemba walk (derived from the Japanese) is an activity that takes management to the front lines to look for waste and opportunities to practice practical improvement.

Farewell Fikile...

Staff gathered in the Oasis Room on January 19, 2012 to say farewell to colleague Dr Fikile Sithole who was due to leave COHSASA at the end of the month to take up a specialist position in the Obstetrics and Gynaecology Department at Mamelodi Hospital north of Pretoria. At his farewell, Professor Stuart Whittaker wished Fikile well and said he admired many of his qualities, in particular his ability to negotiate with irate taxi drivers in Cairo!

Fikile said he would carry with him into the future many invaluable lessons he had learnt at COHSASA. He said he had matured at COHSASA and that his job had taken him to places in South Africa and in Africa that he wouldn't otherwise have visited. He said that COHSASA has taught him about leadership and for that he would be forever grateful.

"My growth and experience at COHSASA was far beyond learning the technical know-how of surveying, facilitating, validating, presenting, etc., but went to the core of my development as an individual in navigating the changing landscape of the personal and work environment at COHSASA, in the health sector within and outside the South African borders and in my personal relationships. It is this development that has enabled me to have the guts to return to the clinical environment that I had left a number of years ago out of frustration with the health system," he said

The farewell was ironically marked by an overwhelming wish by all present that Fikile will one day return to COHSASA. Everyone kept shouting, "The door will always be open." There was laughter (only Fikile can laugh like an angel) and tears (Ingrid James cried when she presented him with an envelope). We will miss you Fikile and wish you well for the future!

In a thank you letter to all his colleagues that arrived soon after he left, Fikile made it clear that the one complaint he had received in his new position was that nobody could read his handwriting. Some things never change! ...Hamba kahle dear Fikile.

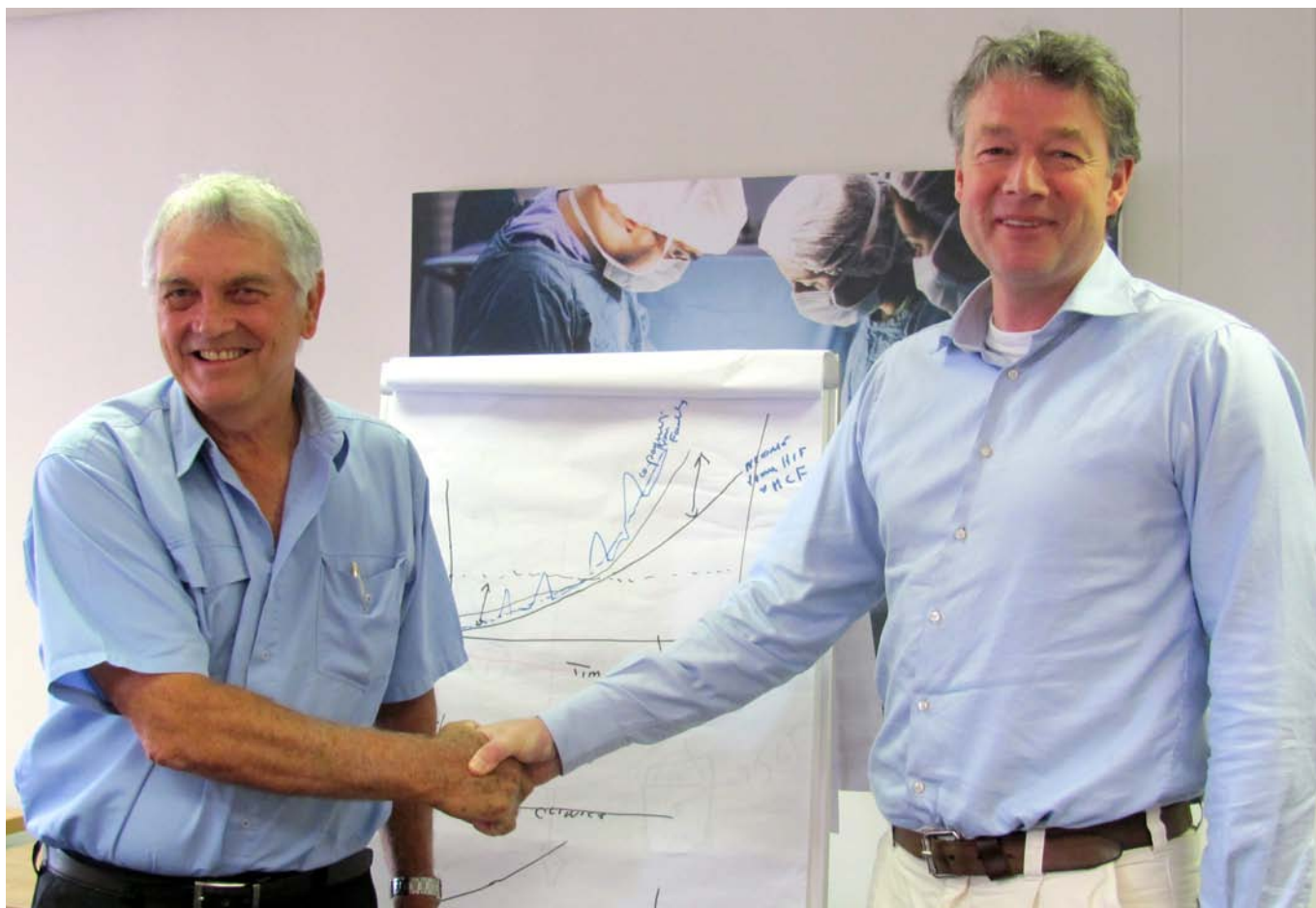


Dr Fikile Sithole



Saying their farewells to Fikile were (from left) Mrs Mtisunge Silungwe, Ms Mamela Nontshakaza and Mrs Kefuoe Qwela.

SafeCare Foundation Established



Acting CEO of PharmAccess and COHSASA Board Member, Mr Jan Willem Marees, paid a visit in February 2012 to work out a feasible budget and business plan for the initial years of operation of the SafeCare Foundation. He is seen here shaking hands with Professor Stuart Whittaker, CEO of COHSASA.

News about the establishment of the SafeCare Foundation went out into the world on February 17, 2012. The tripartite agreement setting up the Foundation has been signed by COHSASA, PharmAccess and JCI to formalise their commitment and dedication to improve the safety and quality of health care provided in resource-restricted countries.

SafeCare has grown out of a global initiative, launched at an international conference held in March 2011 at the Cape Town International Convention Centre, to introduce a comprehensive quality improvement programme using internationally recognised standards to improve healthcare delivery. The SafeCare Foundation is designed for healthcare providers in resource-restricted settings to assist them in step-wise quality improvement and the delivery of safer care to their patients. As a new Foundation with its International Board and its Secretariat based in Amsterdam, SafeCare will be able to expand its knowledge and capacities even further and build on the concrete experience and skills of its founding organisations.

To date, the SafeCare programme has been initiated in more than 107 clinics in six countries – Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania, Ghana, Lesotho and South Africa.

In certain situations, the SafeCare Foundation will collaborate with other organisations to apply for the funding of quality improvement programmes in resource-restricted settings.

To achieve these objectives and to stimulate healthcare quality and patient safety, the SafeCare Foundation will arrange regular conferences to promote quality standards and healthcare quality issues. SafeCare Foundation will also publish information on the tools, goals and results of the programme and will make information and standards publicly available through its website.

In addition to the above, under the umbrella of the SafeCare Foundation, a SafeCare Knowledge Institute will be established. As an operational research entity, the Knowledge Institute will provide health intelligence data on healthcare quality improvement in Africa, provide benchmarks, perform gaps analyses and study the associations between quality improvement certification and medical output and outcome. These vital analyses can be used to inform donors and governments about the status of health care in specific regions or countries.

SafeCare Surveyors Trained



The first group of SafeCare Surveyors was trained at COHSASA head office in February, with the curriculum moulded to meet the requirements of ISQua's surveyor training programme. It was thus fortunate that news came through on the last day that COHSASA's surveyor training programme had been accredited by ISQua from 2012 to 2016.

The trainees were Ms Millicent Olulo Orera from Kenya, Ms Aletta Kliphuis from Amsterdam, Dr Peter Risha from Tanzania, Dr Dupsie Oludipe from Nigeria and Ms Liz Rose from Cape Town. This training will equip the surveyors to provide formal assessments at clinics in the SafeCare programme. The trainees, who all received their certificates at the completion of the training, were accompanied by PharmAccess colleagues from Amsterdam, Dr Nicole Spieker and Annedien Plantenga.

Highlights of the week included a double birthday: Nicole and Aletta born on the same day in the same year. A surprise tea was held for them in the Oasis Room with much gushing over the eats.



Top: The birthday girls, Dr Nicole Spieker (left) and Ms Aletta Kliphuis.

Above: A flurry of culinary interest was generated at tea-time because the traditional chocolate cake was served with South African goodies – melktert and koeksisters – in honour of our Dutch and African colleagues.

Last Lark

Doctor – You're overweight

Female Patient – I think I want a second opinion

Doctor – OK, you're also ugly.

Smile... you're on candid camera!

A man was driving when he saw the flash of a traffic camera. He figured that his picture had been taken for exceeding the limit, even though he knew that he was not speeding... Just to be sure, he went around the block and passed the same spot, driving even more slowly, but again the camera flashed. Now he began to think that this was quite funny,

so he drove even slower as he passed the area again, but the traffic camera again flashed. He tried a fourth time with the same result. He did this a fifth time and was now laughing when the camera flashed as he rolled past, this time at a snail's pace... Two weeks later, he got five tickets in the mail for driving without a seat belt.

The first “internationally accredited” surveyors



The first surveyors trained at COHSASA Head Office. From left: Ms Liz Rose who is now a certified COHSASA surveyor of Primary Health Care Facilities, Professor Tobias Rinke de Wit who is on assignment from PharmAccess, Dr Modupeola “Dupsie” Oludipe, Dr Nicole Spieker who leads the SafeCare operations in Nigeria, Tanzania, Kenya and (soon) Ghana, Dr Giel van Schalkwyk, Chief Surveyor at COHSASA, Professor Stuart Whittaker, CEO of COHSASA, Millicent Olulo Orere from Kenya, Ms Aletta Kliphuis from Amsterdam and Dr Peter Risha from Tanzania. COHSASA Chief Surveyor wrote to them at the end of the training session: “Congratulations and a BIG welcome to the surveyor community! It was both a pleasure and a privilege to work with you.”



L-R: Ms Millicent Olulo Orere from Kenya, Ms Aletta Kliphuis from Amsterdam, Ms Liz Rose from Cape Town, Dr Peter Risha from Tanzania and Dr Modupeola “Dupsie” Oludipe from Nigeria.

Welcome to new faces



Professor Tobias Rinke de Wit

Professor Tobias Rinke de Wit arrived in Cape Town from the Netherlands with his family in tow in December 2011. He is on assignment from PharmAccess and has been appointed as the Director of Research and Business Development of SafeCare at COHSASA. He will also be overseeing SafeCare projects and assisting with the

integration of activities of COHSASA and SafeCare, in concert with COHSASA staff.

Significant contribution

Professor Rinke de Wit (50) is a PhD molecular immunologist who qualified from the University of Leiden, the Netherlands. After graduation, he worked for 10 years in Ethiopia in

various public and private healthcare research settings, including the Armauer Hansen Research Institute (AHRI) and the Ethiopian Health and Nutrition Research Institute (EHNRI) in Addis Ababa. He established the first molecular immunological laboratory in Ethiopia and contributed significantly to the establishment of the EHNRI as a Centre of Excellence in the East African region. His expertise is in the area of laboratory diagnostics, laboratory management, service testing, laboratory design and planning, scientific research on infectious diseases with an emphasis on HIV and business development and operational research on various aspects of health systems in resource-restricted settings.

Professor Rinke de Wit holds a chair in Sustainable Healthcare at the University of Amsterdam, with a particular expertise in the development, field testing and application of affordable diagnostics for resource-restricted settings. Professor Rinke de Wit is supervising MSc and PhD students in various countries in Africa and in Europe and has published more than 100 articles in peer-reviewed journals. He is employed by PharmAccess International (PAI) Amsterdam with an assignment to the Council for Health Service Accreditation of Southern Africa (COHSASA), South Africa.

Experience in assessment

Professor Rinke de Wit holds Board positions on COHSASA and the Medical Credit Fund (MCF), a fund that provides affordable loans to healthcare facilities in Africa. The MCF operates in close collaboration with the SafeCare Foundation, which is a key area of Professor Rinke de Wit's current activities, while based at COHSASA in Cape Town, South Africa. Professor Rinke de Wit has experience in the assessment of over 100 healthcare facilities in more than 10 countries in Africa and part of his current research is in the area of healthcare quality and safety in resource-restricted settings.

Welcome to new staff



Paddy Clark (above) was appointed as Personal Assistant to Professor Rinke de Wit in January 2012.

This petite dynamo, who trained at Cornhill's Secretarial College in Cape Town in the 70s, began her career as a secretary to account executives in the advertising industry both in Cape Town and in London. She was soon scooped up by the big guns and in 1975 was appointed as secretary to the Chairman of the Federal Council of the Progressive Party in Parliament, Dr Alex Boraine. She remained with Dr Boraine until 2008 as his executive secretary as he founded and held leadership positions in various high-level organisations.

Among these were the Equal Opportunity Foundation (1987-1988); the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA) from 1988 – 1994; Justice in Transition (1994 – 1995); and the South African Truth & Reconciliation Commission [TRC] where Boraine was the Deputy Chairman, from 1995 – 1998. For the next decade and a bit, she

worked closely with Boraine at the International Center for Transitional Justice [ICTJ] fulfilling roles as the Programme Administrator and Executive Secretary until she started at COHSASA this year.

Two additional gifts

Apart from acquiring the usual skills of efficient executive secretaries, Paddy has two additional gifts which COHSASA is delighted to obtain: she has an excellent grasp of an art that is dying but is indispensable to all good business practice – Pitman's shorthand, and she is a dab hand at proofreading, a talent she honed while helping Dr Boraine with the two books he published, "A Country Unmasked," (OUP in November 2000) and "A Life in Transition" (Struik Publishers, 2008).

Paddy is a member of Taverners Toastmasters Club (advanced-silver) and she enjoys reading, gardening and baking. She is an avid sport watcher, in particular rugby and cricket, and a very welcome addition to the COHSASA staff.

Last lark...

Employee: Excuse me sir, may I talk to you?

Boss: Sure, come on in. What can I do for you?

Employee: Well sir, as you know, I have been an employee of this prestigious firm for over ten years.

Boss: Yes.

Employee: I won't beat around the bush. Sir, I would like a raise. I currently have four companies after me and so I decided to talk to you first.

Boss: A raise? I would love to give you a raise, but this is just not the right time.

Employee: I understand your position, and I know that the current economic downturn has had a negative impact, but you must also take into consideration my hard work, pro-activeness and loyalty to this company for over a decade.

Boss: Taking into account these factors, and considering I don't want to start a brain drain, I'm willing to offer you a ten percent raise and an extra five days of vacation time. How does that sound?

Employee: Great! It's a deal! Thank you, sir!

Boss: Before you go, just out of curiosity, what companies were after you?

Employee: Oh, Truworths, Woolworths, Edgars and my Credit Card Company

Welcome Colleen!

Colleen Delbridge joins our full-time staff complement from March. Colleen has been supporting Petro de Beer in the AIMS Call Centre since September 2011, and will continue in her current role as AIMS Call Centre Assistant. Welcome Colleen!

Celebrity Wedding

COHSASA Quality Advisor, Mrs Edith Palmer-Harrington (pictured here on the right of the group), enjoyed a particularly proud and happy moment in the holidays. On December 20, 2011 her son, Bishop Keith Harrington (in the white suit) married celebrity actress (and wedding planner), Sophie Ndaba, who plays the role of Queen Moroka in the SABC 1 soapie "Generations". Says Edith, "The wedding was a surprise because guests were under the impression that Sophie had invited them all to be with her at a normal annual thanksgiving to celebrate what God had done in her life in the past year. Only when they arrived did they realise they were at a wedding! The family had to keep the secret! The wedding, with wall-to-wall celebrities, was held at Summer Place, Hyde Park, Johannesburg.



In the picture (from left): Sophie Ndaba, Bishop Keith Harrington and Mrs Edith Palmer-Harrington. Seated is Sophie's father, Mr Solly Mpasane.

*This is your newsletter. All contributions – jokes, stories, photographs and salacious gossip – are welcome without guarantee of publication. Please send to Marilyn Keegan at marilyn@cohsasa.co.za.
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