



SAMA acknowledges the hard work and dedication of the chairpersons of the various standing committees during the previous three years. Front row: Professor Andries Stulting, Dr Trevor Terblanche, and Professor Mac Lukhele. Back row: Professor John Terblanche, Professor Ed Coetzee, Dr Fazel Randera, Dr Kgosi Letlape, Dr Jan Talma, and Professor Keith Bolton.

He is recognised both as a researcher and as a leader in shaping policy with regard to the disease. In accepting his award, Coovadia said his work gave him the greatest pleasure. 'It is not just work, but a passion. The treatment and the cure is its own reward.'

SAMA also acknowledged the contribution made by standing committee chairpersons for their dedicated and enthusiastic service to the profession during 2004 - 2006. The following persons received certificates of acknowledgements: Professor Keith Bolton (Public Sector Doctors); Professor Ed Coetzee (Education, Science and Technology); Professor Mac Lukhele (Public Sector Doctors); Dr Fazel Randera (Constitutional Transformation Task Team); Dr Jan Talma (Specialist Private Practice); Dr Trevor Terblanche (GP Private Practice); Professor John Terblanche (Health Policy); Professor

Andries Stulting (Human Rights and Ethics); and Dr Sally Velzeboer (Finance).

DOH publication irregularity

The scheduled publication of the National Health Reference Price List (NHRPL) for 2007 by the Department of Health (DOH) has been suspended until further notice. This follows after SAMA questioned the legality of this publication in view of the fact that no regulations exist in terms of the National Health Act to empower the Department to publish the NHRPL. The DOH acknowledged this irregularity and informed SAMA that they would not continue with its publication until the regulations were in place.

The Council for Medical Schemes (CMS) in its Circular 69 announced the NHRPL 2007 project in November 2005. The CMS encouraged the profession to participate in this project by conducting extensive practice cost studies, according to a prescribed methodology, and to submit the results to the CMS in May in order for actual costs to be considered in compiling the NHRPL 2007. Subsequently, the DOH took over the project and appointed a technical task team to evaluate the submissions and proceed with drafting the NHRPL 2007.

Doctors dedicated considerable amounts of money, time and effort on these studies to comply with the published requirements, with the expectation that the costs of running their practices would at last be

considered in determining the NHRPL. However, the process did not proceed as expected and undertakings that the technical task team would consult with and give feedback to the profession did not take place as promised. When the first draft of the NHRPL was published in September, it was clear that the practice cost studies were not taken into account. Increases of 4.6% for GP consultations and 4.9% for specialist consultations for 2007, way below expectations, were proposed. With the suspension of the publication of the NHRPL 2007 it is unlikely that a NHRPL will be published for 2007.

The National Council agreed that SAMA should take all necessary steps to ensure that the profession retains the right to determine their scope of practice, including the associated codes, descriptors and units. Councillors made it clear that doctors should exercise their right to determine the value of their services, and duly inform their patients as such. SAMA will also continue to assert its right of ownership of codes, descriptors and units while deciding under which conditions such codes may be partially or completely used in the public domain.

At the time of going to print, SAMA's private practice committees and the secretariat were finalising the content of the SAMA Doctors' Billing Manual for 2007, which would assist doctors in determining their own professional fees.

Magda Naudé