

PIASA Learnership Drive for More Qualified Medical Representatives

The pharmaceutical industry is making significant strides in addressing the skills shortage of knowledgeable and qualified pharmaceutical sales representatives.

At the Pharmaceutical Industry Association of South Africa's (PIASA) recent Learnership Update, the association provided feedback to its members and other delegates on the significant effort that has been put into developing a National Certificate: Pharmaceutical Sales Representation - a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Level 5 qualification - as well as a Learnership Programme.

"The qualification will significantly improve the quality of candidates entering the industry"

"PIASA has recently engaged with organisations such as the Chemical Industries Education & Training Authority (CHIETA) and the South African Pharmacy Council (SAPC) to address challenges

associated with the practical implementation of the initiative including the finalisation of necessary administrative requirements and clarifying various stakeholder roles and processes," said Vicki St Quintin, COO of PIASA.

The training of the NQF level 5 qualification will be implemented by accredited training providers and a strong focus will be placed on practical experience with approximately 30% of the 12-month curriculum being classroom-based, and 70% workplace-based.

"The course will enable learners to demonstrate an understanding of treatment options for common conditions, use knowledge of pharmacology to provide information on the appropriate use of medicines within the limits of the approved prescribing information, and use clinical research findings to provide a service to health practitioners. Essentially, the qualification will significantly improve the quality of candidates entering the industry and graduates will be fully equipped to effectively communicate with health professionals," St Quintin explained.

The Learnership Update also highlighted the current shortage of qualified and skilled pharmacists and Moshe Mkogalane, regional manager for CHIETA pointed out that the industry is currently experiencing an estimated shortage of 21 000 pharmacists.

Mkogalane urged delegates to start asking the right questions and form workable partnerships to address the evident skills shortage.

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"Key to the process is to look at the current state of pharmacy schools in terms of capacity and identifying and implementing strategies to create a pool of qualified learners," Mkogalane emphasised.

According to Mkogalane, mentorship and workplace experience is a key issue and at present there are not enough opportunities for learners to gain valuable practical experience. He urged delegates and the pharmaceutical industry as a whole to become actively involved in addressing this issue.

"Strengthening the skills base of pharmacists is an area that PIASA is looking into and, for example, the association will explore ways to assist in addressing the shortage of regulatory pharmacists.

"PIASA and its members are fully committed to play an integral role in the development of quality candidates entering the pharmaceutical market," St Quintin concluded.

Janssen Awards Bursaries to Pharmacology Students

Nine students, who enrolled for the two-year part-time postgraduate diploma course in Pharmaceutical Medicine at Stellenbosch University (SU), received bursaries from Janssen South Africa, at a function held on Friday, 17 February 2012.

The bursaries, worth R200 000 in total, will assist the students to pursue this relatively new

course, which was launched in 2010 by the Pharmacology Division of the Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS) at SU and the Tiervlei Trial Centre. This is the only postgraduate training programme in South Africa or other African countries which covers the full discipline of pharmaceutical medicine.



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Pharmaceutical Industry Pledges 14bn Treatments to End Nine Neglected Tropical Diseases

Worldwide, one billion people, or one person in seven, suffer from neglected tropical diseases (NTDs). Mainly affecting those in tropical and subtropical areas across the globe, nine NTDs represent more than 90% of the global NTD burden.

In response, the International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers & Associations (IFPMA) announced on 30 January 2012 that the research-based pharmaceutical industry will donate 14 billion treatments this decade to support the elimination or control of the nine NTDs.

Averaging 1.4 billion treatments annually, the donations build upon companies' existing medicines donation programmes, which already reach millions of people around the world.

"The industry is also highly involved in capacity building efforts in developing countries and medical innovation in support of the fight against NTDs."

The donations follow the World Health Organization's (WHO) announcement of new NTD targets to be achieved by 2020. The WHO highlighted nine NTDs whose elimination or control is achievable with adequate supply and distribution of the relevant medicines. For maximum impact, these donations focus on those nine NTDs that represent more than 90% of the global NTD burden, including human African trypanosomiasis; Chagas disease; lymphatic filariasis; soil-transmitted



Guinea worm emerging from foot ulcer
helminths; onchocerciasis; schistosomiasis; leprosy; fascioliasis and blinding trachoma.

"While the majority of the nine NTDs are most prevalent in sub-Saharan Africa, their impact reaches beyond African borders and affects those in rural areas as well as urban settings in low-income countries such as Asia and Latin America. These populations stand to significantly benefit from the medicine donated by the pharmaceutical industry," explained Vicki St Quintin, COO of the Pharmaceutical Industry Association of South Africa (PIASA), who is a member of the IFPMA.

In addition to the treatment donations, the research-based pharmaceutical industry is also highly involved in capacity-building efforts in developing countries and medical innovation in support of the fight against NTDs. From a local perspective, GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) created an NTD pool in 2009 to stimulate research into medicines. GSK also established an R&D facility in Tres Cantos, Spain, dedicated to developing new treatments to combat diseases of the developing world.

"The IFPMA announcement indicates what companies are intending to do and individual pharmaceutical companies, locally and globally, will undertake their own programmes in support of the treatment donations. What is clear, however, is that the industry is highly committed to fighting disease and improving patients' lives," St Quintin concluded.

Improving lives with quality medicines

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