

# SASOHN

## Newsletter

December 2020  
[www.sasohn.co.za](http://www.sasohn.co.za)  
#SASOHN



**SASOHN**  
SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIETY OF  
OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH  
NURSING PRACTITIONERS



# From the Editor

What a year it has been! From celebrating Year of the Nurses to Nurses being placed in the frontline of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Karen Kemper wrote an article on the Year of the Nurse. She kindly agreed to allow us to print her article in the newsletter.

Our President, Denise, has been dragging us into the 4<sup>th</sup> Revolution, kicking and screaming. Denise, the COVID-19 pandemic gave your endeavours an almighty push into the 4<sup>th</sup> Revolution!

National EXCO and some Regional EXCOs and Regions have had virtual online meetings with a degree of success. NIOH has hosted COVID-19 online / webinar presentations since March 2020. All 55 presentations are available on their website. Do browse – it is well worth the time. OHNs now earn CPD points for attending!

Our National office-bearers have also been very busy collating news articles: Year Of The Nurse.

SASOHN's Women's Day and Denise wrote an article for the Journal: SASOHN Celebrating 40 Years.

Due to the pandemic, the Academic Day and Conference had to be cancelled and the same regions will host these events next year.

By the same token, no AGM meetings could take place and all committee members stand over till next year. Big thank you to all of you for standing an extra year and keeping our regions going.

Once again big thank you to all who have contributed towards the newsletter. You are all acknowledged in your articles.

R. Johnson & Y. Van Zill

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# Warm greetings SASOHN

**A**fter months of an economically costly lockdown and health care workers working around the clock, little or no time has been available for hobbies or recreational interests.

*The year 2020 has been a very challenging and exhausting one for all of us including SASOHN.*

Our passion and caring for the sick has now become something that we can eat, sleep and think about all day and night. Gone are those days whereby one had a normal work routine. Nurses, including myself, are working nonstop with no end in sight. Little or no time is available for family and this is creating a huge concern as the mental health of all health care workers remain one that is on the increase.

The year 2020 has been a very challenging and exhausting one for all of us including SASOHN. The world we once knew whereby we planned and made preparations, suddenly changed altogether with the arrival of the COVID 19 pandemic. Academic days, workshops and the conference had to be postponed. Regular face to face meetings was cancelled and in came the virtual online meetings. SASOHN and those working in corporate organizations had to quickly adapt to these changes. As much as it is easier and accessible, the personal touch, the laughs and networking was something in the distant memory. Our routine has changed, some of us work from home and are trying to juggle work-life balance, sitting in uncomfortable spaces for virtual meetings has made us think about the ergonomics and the impact and outcome all of this will have in the near future.

The year 2020 took each of us on a roller coaster ride and information overload of COVID 19. Change is always good and maybe being in positive spirits for 2021 might just be what each of us needs. We are at a crucial moment in the journey to the future of healthcare – an age of opportunity and new developments and ways of thinking and practising occupational health. The current generation of younger professionals will soon make up the majority of our local healthcare workforce. They have the responsibility and the privilege of delivering the changes that are needed to ensure healthcare systems are fit for its purpose. Value-based care is, of course, the ultimate aspiration of this, and can result in better health outcomes.

In this final edition of the Newsletter for 2020, I request that we focus on ourselves, look at our mental health and remember all the wonderful memories we had as SASOHN members over these last 40 years. No doubt this was going to be a year full of celebrations at our annual conference, which did not happen due to unforeseen circumstances. As you may know that Zimbali Coastal Resort was the chosen venue for the conference, however, it went under business rescue. SASOHN might lose the deposit that was paid to secure the venue, hence all measures are being put into place to ensure that SASOHN's finances continue to be healthy and viable to meet its obligations.

It's important to take control of our mental health and try our best to focus on self-care when away from work. We owe it to yourself to intentionally



Denise Minnie, SASOHN President

control how we spend time away from work and how to make the most of the time that we have. After returning home from work, most nurses do not have outlets to deal with the heavy mental load that was required of them in the workplace. It is not a reassuring time for nurses. And, many of us might feel as if a tsunami of COVID-19 patients could overwhelm us at any moment.

Here are some ways we can manage feelings of anxiety and be overwhelmed as we tackle the COVID-19 pandemic. Let's get creative and start Video chatting with friends and family. It will make us less vulnerable to depression and anxiety. A physical activity program is also great to combat occupational stress and burnout syndrome of our profession. It is likely to improve your perceptions of bodily pain and feeling of fatigue at work. It can also assist to take off some work pressure. Let's limit unnecessary social media news and try watching light-hearted news content.

Laughing is no joke when it comes to relieving anxiety and stress. Laughing has many therapeutic benefits for those under extreme duress, including reducing depression, calming the nervous system, and producing oxytocin. Nurses are great instructors on how to eat a healthy diet, but sometimes taking our own advice during times of extreme stress can be challenging. But what is right for patient-care, also goes for hard-working nurses, many of which are already suffering from severe burnout and exhaustion. Stress and immune function are interrelated. Eating the right foods can help boost immunity, especially for nurses nerve-wracked about COVID-19. Always remember that you are not alone in this struggle, therefore talk to colleagues or other healthcare professionals that can assist. It can help you put a voice to your fear and may help you be more open to exploring helpful ways to manage it.

And lastly, little gratitude can go a long way for our mental health. Try starting every day simply saying 3 things that you are grateful for. It can be as simple as feeling grateful for your warm bed, food in the pantry and a roof over your head. The more you practice gratitude, the more you'll find

things to be grateful for, even in these challenging times.

As nurses, we often try to be the superheroes - packing on the weight of the world. Yes, we are nurses but, we are also spouses, parents, breadwinners, and we play so many other roles in society. Here's a warm reminder that it's OK to ask for help. Remind yourself, and others, that we will get through this.

This festive season and for the year 2021, my wish for you is simple:

**To be happy, to find happiness no matter what life throws at you, the biggest**

*motivator is you yourself. The day your inner-self is awakened toward any goal, nobody can stop you from reaching that goal."*

*"Imagine being so close to your target, and someone tells you to turn back.*

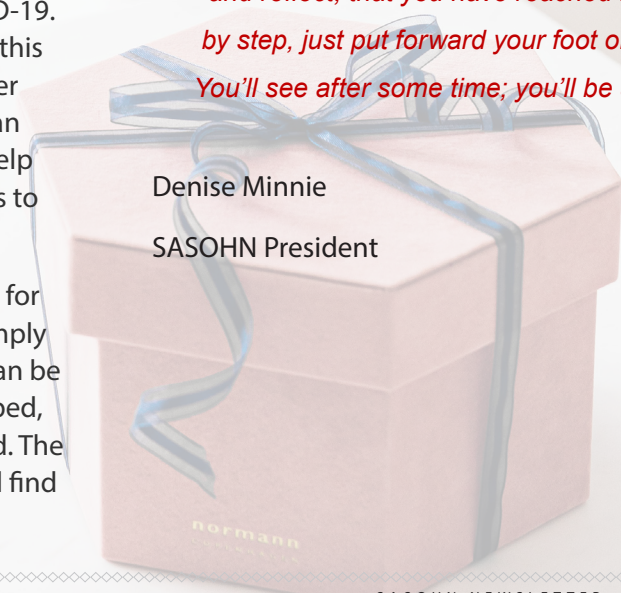
*Imagine how that would feel.....*

*You don't get golden chances like this again and again. It depends on you if you take these chances or let go. I never wanted to let go of my golden chance....*

*Sometimes in life, situations arise where you are all alone, and only you have to take a decision, wherever you are, turn back to see and reflect, that you have reached here step by step, just put forward your foot once more. You'll see after some time; you'll be at the top."*

Denise Minnie

SASOHN President



PHOTOGRAPH BY KAROLINA GRABOWSKA



# COVID -19 PANDEMIC

Y. Van Zijl, GC Region

**W**hat to say? The unexpected has happened! A catastrophe that has affected the world has occurred. And the world was caught napping.

When China informed the world of a new virus that struck the Wuhan Province, I thought: That's bad. But hopefully, like SARS, it will be contained and not spread. How wrong I was. The full impact only occurred when Italy was the focus. Now it was something that could not be ignored any longer. First Italy then Spain, Europe and the USA sustained heavy death toll.



South Africa initiated a severe lockdown and for about 10 weeks all citizens were in self-isolation. Slowly industry was allowed to open and conduct business. And the issues of COVID prevention in the workplace was issue and agenda number 1!

Occupational Health services scrambled to put measures in place to minimise the infection risk. The at-risk health groups [ the over 60s, co-morbidities] were deemed to at risk to work! Get

doctors' approval to work. You are healthy but you can't work because of age and co-morbidities you have.

I'm sure senior management never thought to include themselves in this category! So now the game plan changes. People need to work but can't come to work due to their risk factors and work generates income; income desperately needed for the companies to survive. A conundrum you may say? A major concern for all!

And so my journey with COVID – 19 begins. Staying at home during lockdown was initially not a problem. Finances were tight, but I managed.

Then retrenchments were on the cards and the worry of whether your factory will survive. The impact on the OHC is enormous.

I wear a mask - the best I can afford. I have bought 4 different types of masks to protect myself and my family. I wear surgical masks, face shield, gloves and feel like theatre nurse in scrubs.

I yell at employees to wear their face masks properly, to social distance and then I have to reassure those who stressed out worrying they will get COVID and die.

With the easing of lockdown to lower levels, that no retrenchments took place, the stress eased somewhat. Health education has given and opportunities to discuss fears and anxieties alleviated some of the stress.

The adjustment of medical surveillance proved to be challenging. The biggest challenge to catch up on outstanding medicals. But with employee participation, the catch up is almost complete.

I have been lucky that no employees so far have avoided being infected. But with this knowledge comes complacency. Management remains vigilant and precautions in place at times need to be re-enforced.

As the saying goes: "This too shall pass". Until then: South Africa starts recovering and it is with positive thoughts that we face the future.

# THE SUCCESS OF A WELL-MANAGED COVID RESPONSE AT THE KIC FACTORY.

Bev. Mc Lean, 17 September 2020

**A** healthcare workers perspective!

It is with pride and humble gratitude that I can report neither I nor any of my Health Team contracted the Covid virus! We remain vigilant and trust our continued efforts will keep us and our KIC family safe through the remaining



months.

Having a well-planned response that started with all the company managers meeting, assessing where and what changes needed to be made, then promptly implementing these changes, is where this story begins.

With the immediate support from the Company Directors, and initially using hygienic common sense and recommendations from the World Health Organization this factory began its health awareness training and making ergonomic changes early in March 2020.

And then, the hard lockdown had us all go home for 7 weeks.

Once the Covid Regulations were promulgated and the necessary permits granted, all department heads jumped in and did their bit to have the entire factory "Covid Ready" early in May.

Modern technology via the bulk SMS had the required 30% of employees on-site and ready to recommence production on the 18th of May. Credit must be given to our Union who assisted in supporting and

*And so, the roller coaster ride began!*

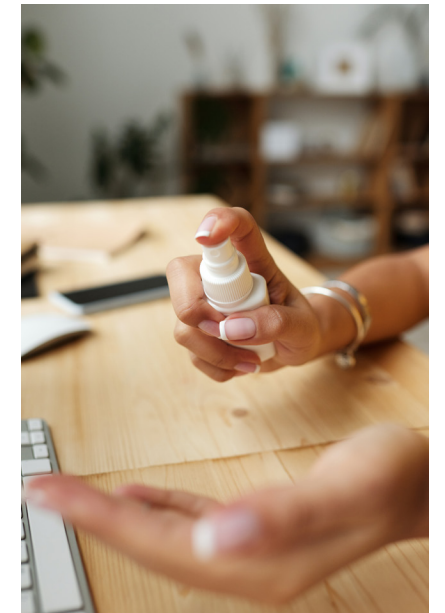
communicating the new "rules" to everyone.

Change is not easy, like a new pair of shoes, it took a few weeks to adjust to this new normal. No one likes masks, or keeping themselves away from others, the beginning was uncomfortable.

My health team worked with the security team checking temperatures, wearing of masks, and making sure everyone sanitized before entering the factory. Wellness Centre

routines were adjusted, and I became a skilled detective.

Social media especially the popular "WhatsApp" enabled me to keep all symptomatic employees off-site, but certainly not out of mind, while I got to implement the daily monitoring, tracing, and tracking of all possible contacts. Some days I felt I had become a call center telephonist, I went



home with sore fingers from all the calls I'd made and cases I'd written up. Covid became my life!

My team and I worked hard keeping everyone safe, answering all the questions, identifying and counselling the vulnerable employees, and busting all the media myths that overwhelmed us.



The statistics speak for themselves. (Data correct as at 2020.09.17 @ 12.00)

16 confirmed Covid positive cases – all traced from funerals, shared transport, or family members. No one has been found to have contracted the illness from the factory!

- 85 total cases managed offsite (close contacts, suspects, and positives) monitored daily and safely returned to work.
- 30 low-risk contacts managed while still working.
- 1 case hospitalized.
- 0 deaths.
- 0 close contacts became positive.

The annual two-week midyear, maintenance shut, was adjusted to the end of July, thus allowing employees to remain at home during the peak of the Covid outbreak. I believe this together with the fast and efficient Health Team's response played a significant role in maintaining ongoing production during this tough and economically challenging 2020. An additional financial measurement of our success is that as no one was found to have contracted Covid in the workplace, no COID claims needed to be submitted. This has avoided the burden of increased return of earnings over the next few years.

Our Covid story has not yet ended, Covid will remain part of our daily lives, in business, in our communities, and our homes for months, perhaps even years to come. We are tired, but the support, the love and respect the world has shown to healthcare workers keeps us motivated, and we will keep doing our best.

If only, I can get the # Jerusalema challenge dance moves right

# Mental Health Awareness

Lebohang Molefe, SASOHN WR

**M**ental health awareness is a tool through which the public at large can be educated about mental illness, the causes, and the process of how to deal with it. This refers to people who suffer from mental disorder/s and families affected by it.

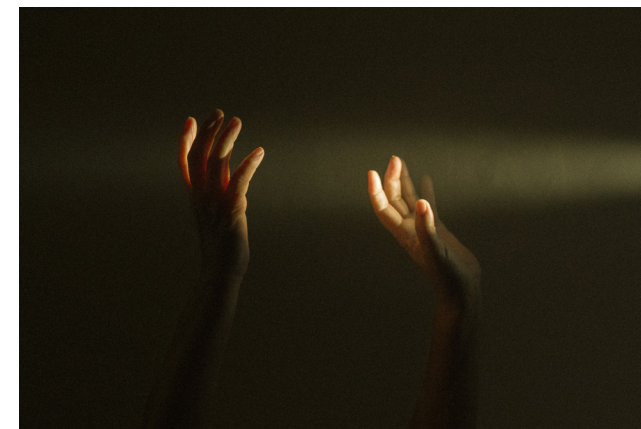
Good mental health is said to be a state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively, and works to contribute to their community. The WHO stress that mental health is "more than just the absence of mental disorders or disabilities." Each year, the



campaign brings a completely new theme with it.

Skylar Siegel states that mental health is more important than many people think. The majority of people don't understand the severity of mental health issues because they aren't impacted or educated about them.

People need to be more aware of the issues regarding mental health. These illnesses can be more serious than one thinks. They range from anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, eating disorders, mood disorders, paranoia, and so much more. They are said to affect a great number of people every single day and many of them feel



isolated as a lack of awareness is prevalent in our society regarding mental health.

According to statistics, one in every five adults experiences a mental illness in a given year - that is a lot of individuals. More than 90% of children who die from suicide have a mental health condition. Approximately 50% of people who have psychiatric disorders receive no help or treatment. Why don't they receive treatment? Fear, shame, limited awareness, distrust, hopelessness, practical barriers and many more reasons. These are all factors that lead to people staying quiet about their issues and choose to not seek out help.

It is time to educate more, focus more, and be holistically aware of the everyday issues people face, says Siegel.

In conclusion, mental health awareness increases the chances of early intervention, which can result in a faster recovery. Awareness reduces negative adjectives that have been set to describe our people with a mental illness. By raising awareness, mental health can now be seen as an illness. These illnesses can be managed with treatment.

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# SURVIVING COVID-19 AS AN OHN IN A HOSPITAL

Lillian Zwane, SASOHN WR

I started feeling sick on a Friday after arriving home from work. I had a very terrible headache, the worst I have ever had. I thought it was from the busy day I'd had at work dealing with all the positive cases of COVID being reported and their contacts. I'd received a very stressful phone call on the way home; one of the employees had tested positive for COVID and they had not quarantined while waiting for their results, and this was our policy. Anyway, I had a quick meal, took 2 Mybulen tablets and went to bed. On Saturday and Sunday, the headache continued but Sunday was better than the Saturday and I had slept most of the weekend and so I told myself the news of Friday must have upset me.

On Monday, I went to work but then I had body aches, the headache was now slight and I told myself it must be from all the sleeping I'd done the weekend, by the end of the day something was wrong and I needed to go to the doctor, I even reported to my boss that I was not feeling too well and needed time off and she agreed that I needed to take care of myself and if I need to take time off I should do that, the company will see how they manage. Tuesday I came to work again because I had a lot of work to get through and I felt better, I had taken the ginger, lemon and honey home remedy and felt better. but by the end of the day, I felt like I could not go on. I went to consult on Wednesday afternoon after work because the last few had been difficult and the home remedy was not helping much and I was now sure had COVID. When I arrived at the doctor's rooms I told the receptionist to take me to the isolation room and alert the doctor and tested for Covid and received my results on the 11<sup>th</sup> July 20.



I was breathing but for some odd reason the air did not reach where it was supposed. My partner said I looked strange and I couldn't speak and that's when he realized he needed to get me to a hospital. At first, I refused and kept saying I would be fine I just needed to relax. As I could feel my breathing getting less I agreed to go to the hospital. We were then told I had to be screened before anything could be done, after the initial screening, everything that happened seemed to take very long because even after they said they had a bed for me it seemed like they were scared of me.

They gave me two surgical masks to don before going into the hospital. I think I walked to the ward but have no memory of it. I know when I got there they gave me oxygen, I had a terrible headache, my oxygen SATS were 78 my temp was 36,1 °C and I waited for the doctor. The doctor came to put up IV therapy and he explained what was going to happen. Everyone is scared of you, you can see the fear in the people's eyes, and they cannot wait to leave. It feels very lonely because you know that nobody can come to visit you and you are not allowed out of your ward. I don't

remember much until Wednesday when I was feeling better and was moved from isolation into a 2-bed ward and I was also more awake and I felt better.

When you can talk then the staff seem to be at ease with you and when they bring your medication then they make small talk and encourage you to do the physio exercises and to walk around to strengthen your lungs On Wednesday when I changed wards they changed me to a nasal cannula and Thursday the Dr told me to try and see

I got admitted on 12<sup>th</sup> July 20 at Daxina Private Hospital in Lenasia, and this was after I was struggling to breathe at home. The difficulty breathing felt strange because I felt

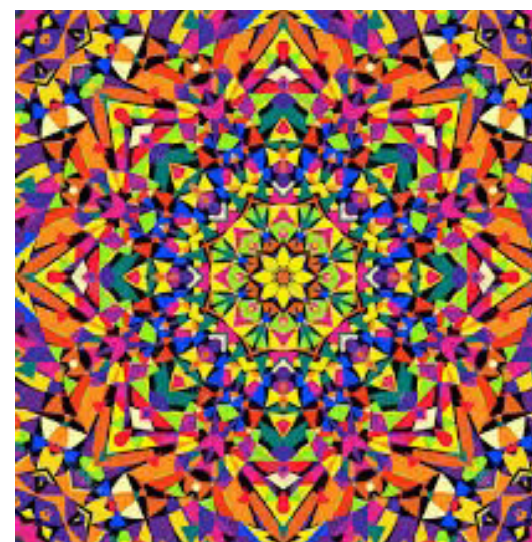
if I can breathe without the cannula. Friday morning I was told I was getting discharged and it was such a relief.

Going home, I realized how thankful I am to have recovered and a huge THANK YOU to all frontline healthcare workers.

## Kaleidoscope 2020

Sandra Muller, Treasurer and EXCO Representative: SASOHN Western Cape

The Wikipedia definition of a "kaleidoscope" is an optical instrument with 2 or more reflecting surfaces, enclosed in a tube with one end containing a cell of loose, coloured pieces of glass. When the cell is rotated, the motion of the glass pieces presents the viewer with an ever-changing picture.



SASOHN Western Cape (WC) has presented several "kaleidoscope" workshops through the years, with the most recent being held on 20-02-2020.

We were delighted that the SASOHN President, Ms Denise Minnie, agreed to open the workshop.



Ms. Denise Minnie, SASOHN President

Each kaleidoscope workshop offers members a capsule of information on a particular theme and provides an opportunity to uplift their professional practice by absorbing ever changing information.

*Each kaleidoscope workshop offers members a capsule of information*

tion in Occupational Health (OH). Engaging with the presenter and colleagues helps to further stimulate one to strive for best professional and, many times, personal best practice.

The theme for 2020 was "TOOLS for the OH Profession" designed to equip attendees with updated information on what we regard as essential "equipment" for occupational health nurse practitioners. We drew on the expertise of four SASOHN members: Estelle Smuts, Lindsay Zurba, Viv Stern & Lindie Jansen van Rensburg.





Ms Lindsay Zurba

The "TOOL" topics included:

- Health Risk Assessment, Dr Hanli De Wet
- Fitness to Work, Dr Hanli De Wet
- Vision Screening without Technology, Dr Greg Kew
- Physical Examination, Estelle Smuts
- Urine Dipstix Analysis: What you Need to Know, Dr Younis Essack
- Spirometry, Lindsay Zurba
- Legislation & Summary of Changes, Lindie Jansen van Rensburg
- Ergonomics, Viv Stern

The event was well attended with 46 SASOHN members, one OH student and four non-members. In addition, we were proud to welcome four Occupational Medical Practitioner's (OMP), including Dr Geoffrey Tafaune, the current South African Society of Occupational Medicine (SASOM) WC chairperson.

Feedback from the attendees was extremely positive, with several asking for another, similar workshop to be held over more than one day's duration.

As always, 12 stalwarts of the occupational health service provider industry were in attendance to show case the latest equipment and to provide support and answers to queries.



Mr Steve Geier of Amtronix

The committee is highly appreciative of the support that all Service Providers show for SASOHN Western Cape and our thanks and appreciation to Ampath, Ed-Unique, Homemed, SSEM Mthembu, Patient Focus Africa, Elana Human, Ergonomicsdirect, Education for Health Africa, PathCare, Onsite X-Rays, Amtronix and Occuvision. The committee further extends thanks to Alan Hastings of Clinic-Sister for a monetary donation made, as he was unable to attend the event.



## NAVIGATING SPIROMETRY IN THE WORKPLACE DURING THIS PANDEMIC

SASOHN GC SEPTEMBER WORKSHOP 11-19 September 2020

Andiswa Bombil, SASOHN GC Ed Rep

### Background:

**W**HO declared 2020 year of the Nurse and by coincidence this has proven to be true as the Nurse had to stand up and fight against a new pandemic; COVID-19 throughout the world. No one predicted that 2020 Nurses will wear coverall suits as though going to the moon when performing their daily routine.

SASOHN had to stop all planned meetings and conferences for this year to curb the virus. This also affected our regional activities which included the cancellation of BLS for Healthcare Providers in April 2020.

### 2020 Academic Program:

While we were dazzled by the ongoing Covid -19 pandemic, SASOHN GC brainstormed blended learning ways on how to reach out to members and fulfil our 2020 Academic Program. This was in line with SASOHN objectives: "Ensure that occupational health nurses continue to professionally develop in their knowledge and/or skills." Each year's academic program is drawn from topics

suggested by members and guests through event evaluations of the previous year. A decision is made in line with topics that have recent updates that need to be communicated to members.

### Spirometry Workshop:

SASOHN GC is grateful to Education for Health Africa who sponsored online platform and speaker for spirometry workshop.

Our concerns about reaching enough members were soon put to rest when to our surprise we a good number of interested members, guests and exhibitors responded on the first flyer. We are pleased to announce that twenty attendees and three exhibitors participated in this region's inaugural virtual workshop:

The workshop was divided into two sessions;

- Contemporary spirometry quality and conundrums. In this session, Education Health for Africa taught on basics of spirometry including calibration and spirometry procedure in detail. Kindly see latest reference documents:
  - ❖ Standard of Spirometry 2019 Update
  - ❖ Spirometry in Occupational Health 2020
- Spirometry Interpretation. This session was all about interpretation of spirometry. The group was divided into breakout rooms where spirometry was discussed in detail. Angie Butkovic and Lindsay Zurba were moderators of this interactive session. Time went so fast that by the end of the session there was still interest to continue with the workshop.

Our exhibitors (ALTRON Healthtech, SSEM Mthembu Medical, HASS Group) were phenomenal with their pre re-recorded service videos. These videos were played at the beginning and the end of sessions, and where necessary during breaks. All attendees were requested to pay attention to the detail in the videos, as an exhibitor prize draw was in store on the last contact day via the exhibitor quiz portal we thank all our exhibitors for their continued support towards achieving another successful SASOHN event. The online wheel of fortune randomly selected the following winners:

- ❖ SASOHN GC USB Pen – Thabitha Masemola



## Feedback from the participants:

We received 13 survey responses. In general, all attendees were satisfied with the workshop.

Registration Process	Very Satisfied 78%
Online Platform	= 3.8
Likelihood of recommending this workshop to a colleague	= 4.8
Event Organization	Extremely Organized 22% Very Organized 68%
Audio Quality	Very high 15% High Quality 68%
Visual Quality	Very High 23% High Quality 77%
Helpfulness of the workshop content	Extremely Helpful 69% Very Helpful 22%
Additional topics that this audience wish to engage with at the next event	More on respiratory conservation programmes; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• spirometry calibration;</li> <li>• interpreting audiograms;</li> <li>• interpreting vision screening results;</li> <li>• audiometry update;</li> <li>• ergonomics in respect of latest regs;</li> <li>• writing of policies, protocols etc.</li> </ul>

For those who missed this inspiring opportunity, we look forward to your additional requests via the Regional Educational Representative and/or Chairperson so we can organize and support more frequent blended learning opportunities.



SASOHN GC August Workshop 2020, supplied by A. Butkovic, 2020

## Caring for Your Hands

Sandra Muller, SASOHN WC

**T**he COVID-19 pandemic has seen a plethora of information about ways to contain the spread of the virus and one of the most effective ways to do this is by washing one's hands.

While thousands of pages of print have been devoted to the act of washing hands with soap and water and/or the application of hand sanitizer & the pros and cons of each method, there has not

been much information about the risk of contact dermatitis in health care workers.

As with other workers, health care workers have a responsibility to take reasonable care for their own and others' health and safety, as well as co-operating with their employers in the implementation of preventive and control measures.

Infection prevention and control is as vital in Occupational Health as they are in other disciplines.

### Why is Hand Care Necessary?

In mitigating the risks of exposure to COVID-19 and other organisms in the workplace, the OHNP may develop hand dermatitis when complying with good hand hygiene practices.

Contact dermatitis is mainly due to frequent hand washing and the use of alcohol-based sanitizers but contact with allergens such as harsh chemicals used for disinfecting surfaces and the use of occlusive gloves can also contribute to the





condition. Contact dermatitis can adversely affect function and quality of life.

Using irritants at home may further injure the skin, as will physical agents such as extremes of temperature, humidity, friction and ultra-violet radiation.

The skin barrier can be breached by:

- Short, infrequent exposure to strong irritants and/or
- Regular repetitive exposure to less damaging irritants

Damage to the skin barrier causes itchy, sore, less supple skin which shows as irritant contact dermatitis or eczema. Once the protective barrier is breached, the skin is prone to secondary bacterial skin infections and allergies (contact allergic dermatitis)

## Hand Skin Preservation Tips

### Sanitizers

There is evidence (Cochrane reviews <https://dermnetnz.org/topics/hand-care-for-healthcare-workers/>) to suggest that an alcohol-based hand sanitizer is more effective and less drying than using soap and water and does not create antibiotic-resistant superbugs.

- At work, choose a colourless, alcohol-based hand cleanser without fragrances and perfumes

- Wash with soap and water only when the skin is visibly soiled or contaminated with blood or other body fluids
- Cream cleansers are not antimicrobial; soap and water or a sanitiser is needed for washing hands to destroy pathogens such as the SARS-CoV-2 virus responsible for COVID-19
- Gloves
- Gloves provide a physical barrier, but the right glove that fits well must be used:
- Latex gloves provide the best protection against viruses for healthcare workers
- Avoid petroleum-based emollients under latex gloves as they weaken the rubber
- Non-powdered gloves are less irritating and drying than powdered gloves
- Nitrile gloves are a suitable alternative for people with latex allergy
- Vinyl gloves are not suitable for healthcare workers in direct contact with bodily excretions
- If wearing occlusive gloves for more than 20 minutes, use well-fitting cotton gloves beneath them to reduce irritation caused by sweating.
- What is the Treatment for Hand Eczema?
- Management of hand eczema entails:
- Minimising contact with irritants
- Avoiding known contact allergens
- Optimising the skin barrier with suitable emollients during work and at home
- Courses of potent topical corticosteroids for flare-ups
- Antibiotics for secondary infection.

## Taking Care of Your Hands

Your skin is the most effective barrier against infection.

After washing hands according to the protocol, make sure to dry your hands thoroughly because few organisms can live in/on dry environments. Wet surfaces are more effective in transmitting micro-organisms than dry ones.

Drying hands with paper towels are quicker and more thorough than using a hand dryer (7-9 seconds compared with 25.4 seconds with dryers).

Also, if hands are not dried properly there is the potential for skin damage to occur.

Look after your hands by:

- Applying a water-based absorbent hand cream three to four times a day, or more frequently if your hands are constantly in water
- Use an emollient hand cream when not at work
- Use gloves to wash dishes to protect your hands
- Use gloves when gardening to prevent a build-up of ingrained soil or scratches and exposure to sunlight
- Consult a doctor if skin irritation develops or continues.

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