



# Panda SA

The Paediatric Neurology and Development Association of Southern Africa

## PANDA Newsletter December 2020

Dear PANDA member

These days when I google PANDA, Pandemics Data and Analysis comes up on my screen rather than the Paediatric Neurology and Development Association of South Africa or those cute little animals native to China. What a crazy year we are having! Who would have predicted this time last year that we would be in the middle of a pandemic, wearing masks, sanitising everything and finding the strongest need to hoard toilet paper and alcohol.

But now for some great and exciting news! PANDA has won the bid to host ICNC 2024 in Cape Town. This is only the 2<sup>nd</sup> time in Africa (2010 in Cairo) and will undoubtedly be the best ICNC ever.

In November 2019, we held a PANDA weekend meeting in Cape Town with the theme of Stroke in Childhood. We invited as our international guest speaker Noma Dlamini who is the Director of the Paediatric Stroke programme at Sick Kids in Toronto and who gave us comprehensive, up to date and informative lectures. An innovation at this meeting was to have every Paediatric Neurology trainee give a 10 – 15 minute presentation. The standard of these presentations were so impressive and the entire meeting was unbelievably successful. My thanks go to Veruschka and Jo for organising.



Paediatric Neurology trainees after their presentations.



Noma Dlamini receiving honorary PANDA membership



Jo and Veruschka who once again organised a great meeting



PANDA has to be the only South African medical group that can boast of having a dame as a member. Helen Cross receiving her certificate of honorary membership

The PET1 courses continued to be very successful and have now been held twice in Cape Town and Johannesburg as well as Pretoria, Durban, Bloemfontein, East London and Windhoek. This year we had courses scheduled in George (March) and Nelspruit (May) which unfortunately.....!! We however did manage to hold 1 course this year in March in Mauritius where the lecture rooms had the best views of any of the courses to date, the most stunning views of the beaches and sea. We were made very welcome and there was great interest. The head of paediatrics was an enthusiastic participant and has invited us back to do another course which we politely accepted.



(L): PET faculty Mauritius  
(R): Karishma who did Paeds in KZN showing us typical Mauritian hospitality

PANDA has a new website designer and we are very happy with the results. We really need more hits though to become google-able, so please look at our website often [www.pandasa.org](http://www.pandasa.org) . My thanks to Ronald and Raj for their hard work.

We have replaced the PANDA Journal Watch done by our trainees with PANDA Webinars which have been of such a high standard. They take place on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of every month at 15h00 – please attend as so much work goes into preparing the webinars. The talks can be found on the PANDA website as well as the dates of the 2021 webinars.

The PANDA weekend meeting scheduled to be in Gauteng last month will now be held 17 - 19<sup>th</sup> September 2021 at Glenburn Lodge. Please diarise!! We really need you there.

PANDA has also been involved in advocacy issues:

The World Health Organization's Expert Committee on the Selection and Use of Essential Medicines decided not to recommend that methylphenidate be added to its Essential Medicines List (EML) or the Essential Medicines List for Children (EMLc) for the treatment of Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). PANDA has been part of the group sending letters to the WHO asking for this decision to be changed.

As Jo, Raj and I are on the excos of both the SA Chapter of ILAE and PANDA, it is not surprising that there is an overlap of activities for both organisations. We supported the

ILAE's submission to the 73<sup>rd</sup> World Health Assembly in November 2020 appealing for the development of the Intersectoral Global Action Plan on Epilepsy and its synergies with other neurological disorders. Jo and I have also joined a National Epilepsy Task Force with aims to address the lack of availability of certain essential drugs and the treatment gap, national health care plans for epilepsy management and the training and education of health care workers and educating the public in awareness of epilepsy.

Unfortunately there has been little progress with regard to the coding issues for those in private practice, but we continue to try.

In November last year, 2 PANDA founding members who have been on the executive since the beginning both resigned. My thanks to Andre Venter and John Rodda for all their hard work, dedication, sage advice, support and wisdom. They have both received special recognition awards from PANDA to show our appreciation, but we are truly grateful to both of them. Andre as past chairman continues to be on exco.



Nov 2019: Out-going PANDA exco  
(missing Andre)

The success of PANDA would not be possible without the most brilliant, fantastic and supportive executive committee where each and every member plays an important role and puts their hands up to help and get things done. Thank you to Kirsty, Ronald, Jo, Elsa, Raj, Veruschka, Tee, Regan and Marc. Thanks to Ronald for the unenviable task of handling the finances. Welcome to Regan and Marc on exco.



Nov 2019: Incoming PANDA exco (missing Tee)  
(I cant explain the background of wine bottles)

Thank you to all our members for their support and contributions and thanks to all those members who respond to my e-mails, I enjoy knowing what you think of me and my letters (most of the time).

PANDA turns **25 YEARS OLD** next year! We need to celebrate.

Stay safe! Have a wonderful holiday and a good rest! Wishing you a merry Christmas and a happy and healthy 2021!

Best wishes  
Gail

