

ZWDA PRESIDENT REPORT 2021 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

It is with much pleasure that I submit the first President's Report of the Zimbabwe Women Doctors Association. It is now 2 years since we formed our Association – and the main reason for forming it was to become a part of the greater global community of women doctors by joining the Medical Women's International Association, an association of thousands of medical women and students from all six continents of the world. We also felt that as women doctors, we face unique challenges compared to our male counterparts and we needed an organisation to help tackle these challenges as well as to provide a platform for support, networking and communication. A survey we carried out in May 2019 of women doctors showed that 60% of respondents felt that they had been discriminated against in their career because they were women and 57.7% felt that they had suffered from sexual harassment and bullying in the workplace.

Our most notable achievement as an Association is that we were granted membership of the Medical Women's International Association in July 2019 at the Centennial Congress of the MWIA under the coordination of the Near East and Africa region. For the first time, Zimbabwe had representation at an MWIA Congress – Dr Munhutu was able to attend the MWIA Centennial Congress on our behalf. We were looking forward to attending our first regional MWIA congress which was scheduled to take place in Abuja, Nigeria but this was postponed due to the pandemic. We have since have since attended various MWIA regional conferences virtually. We have also had the privilege of having our Association's activities showcased in the quarterly MWIA report.

We are also now formally affiliated with the Zimbabwe Medical Association (ZiMA) who have also most generously allowed us free use of their secretariat services, use of their premises for future ZWDA events and points for our CME events.

Before the pandemic, we were able to hold 4 events as an association:

On 28th June 2019, a networking and consultative cocktail dinner was held at the Rotary Club which was attended by 75 women doctors of different grades, backgrounds and specialities. We heard presentations on the history of women in medicine, history of the Medical Women's International Association and results of the survey of women doctors and discussed the way forward for the Association. Our guest of honour was Dr Madeline Nyamwanza-Makonese, the first black female doctor in Zimbabwe, first black woman to graduate from the University of Rhodesia Medical School and second black woman on the African continent and we were all inspired and motivated to hear how she challenged the cultural and racial prejudices that prevented black women in Rhodesia from pursuing careers in medicine. The event was very successful, motivating and well received by the participants.

Our second meeting was themed Mentorship - 1 November 2019 in response to our survey in which 75% of the 114 respondents indicated that they would like to participate in a mentoring program. There were 66 attendees, a third of whom were medical students. Dr Tsikai gave a presentation outlining how the program will be run as well as a lecture on how to develop a successful mentee-mentor relationship.

Later that month, we held a free 3hour Financial Literacy Course for Women Doctors and Medical Students hosted by Stanbic Bank Zimbabwe on the 22 November 2019. There were 44 participants including medical students. Topics covered included Employee Value Banking, Taxes, Loans, Investments, Insurance and Debt Management.

We also held our first Christmas dinner on Friday 6 December 2019. It was a successful event with 67 women doctors and medical students in attendance. Junior doctors in Zimbabwe had been on strike without pay for the last 3 months, therefore the Executive Committee had initiated an #AdoptAnIntern scheme where senior doctors were encouraged to buy tickets for those junior doctors who could not afford it. Almost a third of tickets were bought through the scheme. The guest of honour was Dr Madeline Nyamwanza-Makonese, and we also had in attendance Dr Tsitsi Chawatama, a Zimbabwean paediatrician based in the UK who would go on to become the Chair of Save the Children, UK.

In December 2019 we also formed a Communication and Social Media Subcommittee. It was felt by the executive committee that there was need for a subcommittee to develop social media accounts for the Association so as to increase our profile and encourage more women doctors to join the Association. A call for volunteers was made on Friday 1 November and 4 applicants were successful – Dr Govere, Dr Parekh, Dr Muringani and Dr Mkhario. The Subcommittee held its first meeting on Tuesday 17th December. Our facebook page currently has 469 followers, our twitter page has 650 followers and our Instagram page has 304 followers.

The association started accepting formal membership from women doctors in Zimbabwe from January 2020 with an annual subscription fee of USD 10 – 8 of which would be remitted to MWIA for affiliation. The Executive Committee voted unanimously to give honorary lifetime membership to Dr Nyamwanza-Makonese, Professor Nathoo and Professor Chitsike, who are some of the first female doctors in Zimbabwe. The annual membership fee includes a 20% discount for women wellness checks (mammography, breast ultrasound and bone densitometry) at the Well Woman Clinic in Harare and 20% discount for all beauty treatments at the Skin Spa which was negotiated by the Executive Committee.

After much deliberation, the executive committee agreed on a logo design to represent the Zimbabwe Women Doctors Association. The purple dahlia flower was chosen as the flower of the association and part of the logo as it has a feminine energy, unique appearance and is known to symbolise grace, elegance, inner strength, creativity, change and dignity. The multi-layered petals of the dahlia flower represent the individual women doctors and medical students coming together in unity, support and friendship. There are two flowers on the logo - The smaller flower represents medical students and the larger flower represents the qualified doctors. The stethoscope represents our profession.

I am also pleased to report that we have recently received full sponsorship for the development of our new website from a website design company called Lucrative Craft and sponsorship for website hosting for 12 months from Pedigree Events. The Communications and Social Media Committee has started working with Lucrative Craft on the new website.

In March 2020, the country went into a national lockdown as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and a lot of the plans that the Executive Committee had, had to be put on hold, namely:

Quarterly networking events.

Mentorship Program

Financial Literacy Program

1st Annual General Meeting, Annual Conference and themed President's Gala Dinner

The committee then made a decision to continue to develop the social media presence of the association and remain active on the Whatsapp Group and other social media platforms:

- An online 'Women in Medicine' Chat was held in February 2020 was held on Telegram to discuss the topic of Gender Bias in Medicine
- Dr Monalisa Muchatuta, A Zimbabwean emergency physician based in the US created a video for members of the association detailing her experiences working as a front line worker during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- A 'Woman Doctor of the Month' campaign was launched in March with the aim of honouring women in medicine in Zimbabwe who have made an impact on colleagues and patients over the years. Women doctors who are excelling in their field are identified by the Communications and Social Media Subcommittee and a short biography and achievements of the relevant doctor are circulated on our social media platforms to motivate other women doctors and medical students. The first 'Woman Doctor of the Month' was Dr Madeline Nyamwanza Makonese.
- Dr Chido Rwafa, gave a virtual talk entitled 'Smiling for real – Addressing depression in the strong African woman' for members of the association which was well received. Other talks by Dr Rwafa included Mental health – coping with crisis, Dealing with Stress in uncertain times
- During the month of October, we encouraged women doctors and the public to get screened for breast cancer through a #MaskUpGetScreened campaign
- We held an online Mentorship CME Event meeting was held, which included speakers Dr Walter Mangezi and Dr Nancy Jonker, a member of the association on the topic of 'How to form a Peer to Peer Mentorship Group' to encourage members to form their own mentorship groups.
- Members of the association registered and participated in 2 online MWIA events: Women Doctors Around the World: Advocates for Women's Empowerment and the Precongress Webinar on Gender and COVID-19

In association with Miracle Missions and Mr Brands, the association donated food hampers to 16 vulnerable female led households in Epworth, a poor community in Zimbabwe with the assistance of Springs of Life Zimbabwe and we also raised funds to assist junior doctors who were on strike with an #AdoptAnIntern Campaign – grocery items were bought and distributed to the younger members of the association.

We do not, at this stage, know to what degree functions and gatherings will be impacted for the remainder of the year or coming years due to the pandemic but one certainty is we can all be very proud of all that has been achieved in the past 2 years in laying the foundation for this new organisation. I am excited about the future of this association, particularly under the leadership of the new Executive Committee that is coming in. This association has incredible potential to significantly impact the working lives of women doctors in Zimbabwe. Women fought long and hard to get into medicine but we still have work to do ensure that we are fulfilling our potential by addressing the issues that are holding us back.

I thank most sincerely the wonderful group of dedicated Executive Committee ladies that I have been working with – Dr Nomsa Tsikai, Dr Audrey Chivaura, Dr Shingai Nyaguse-Chiurunge, Dr Louisa Mudawarima-Chikara and Dr Fungisai Hove and Communications and Social Committee ladies - Dr Govere, Dr Parekh, Dr Muringani and Dr Mkharo. It has been a joy and honour to volunteer alongside of you.

I table my report for 2021.

Dr Maitazvenyu Mvere-Chatora

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