



NSSA newsbits

Northern Branch Scientific Event

The Northern branch of the Nutrition Society of South Africa (NSSA) held a joint scientific event with the Department of Human Nutrition and Dietetics at Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU) in Ga-Rankuwa, Pretoria on 15 September 2017, with the theme “*Updates on feeding the South African child*”. The event was opened by the Head of the Department of Human Nutrition and Dietetics at SMU, Prof Frederick Veldman, whereafter the Dean of the School of Healthcare Sciences, Prof S Lekalakala-Mokgele, welcomed the attendees and speakers.

In celebration of the NSSA's 60th year of existence, Prof Marius Smuts spoke about the origin of NSSA and some of its history and purpose. He mentioned that the inaugural meeting of the NSSA was held in Johannesburg on 11 February 1957. Dr FW Fox, a biochemist from London University, who joined the South African Institute for Medical Research (SAIMR) in 1925, was elected the first President of NSSA. Dr Fox is considered by many as the father of nutritional research in South Africa. In later years, Dr Fox became the academic mentor, stimulator and *critic* of Dr ARP Walker. To honour his commitment and significant contribution to scientific knowledge of nutrition within the South African context, the NSSA instituted the William Fox memorial prize.

The NSSA is a scientific society with the aim to advance the scientific study of nutrition, promote objective dissemination of knowledge related to nutrition and promote appropriate strategies for the improvement of nutrition well-being. Aligned with the aims of the society, the NSSA initiated the process to develop the South African

Food-based Dietary Guidelines (FBDGs) in partnership with various stakeholders. The FBDGs were adopted by the Department of Health in 2003 to form the basis of nutrition communication to the general public. A similar process was initiated by the NSSA when they established a paediatric working group to develop FBDGs for infants and children younger than seven years of age, which were published in 2007. The FBDGs have since been revised. Membership to NSSA is open to any suitably qualified person whose work may contribute to scientific knowledge of nutrition or to its application to the promotion of human health. Membership does, however, not render the member eligible for registration, nor to practice, as a nutritionist. The latter process is regulated by the HPCSA (Professional Board for Dietetics and Nutrition).

The presenters addressed the audience on aspects related to infant feeding within the South African context. These included “acute malnutrition and recent advances in early detection and action” (presented by Dr Shuaib Kauchali, paediatrician in the Department of Health); “the first 1000 days and fatty acids, and the associations with long-term health” (presented by Prof Marius Smuts, Director of the Centre of Excellence for Nutrition at North-West University); and “mycotoxins and the effect on child health” (presented by Dr Tani Lombard, dietitian and senior lecturer at North-West University). “Infant feeding recommendations, regulations and practices within the South African context” was presented by Magda Botha (on behalf of Maria van der Merwe, dietitian and nutritionist, Provincial Nutrition Programme Manager, Mpumalanga). Lastly, an ethics presentation with the topic “is what is legal, always ethical?” was given by Prof Magda Slabbert (LLD Medical Law, Professor at UNISA).