

Newsletter of the Physiology Society of Southern Africa (PSSA)

## Editor's words

On 5-9<sup>th</sup> September 2005 some of the greatest brains driving the scientific community in Southern Africa descended on the Sports Science institute of South Africa for the 33<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the Physiology Society of South Africa. With 120 abstracts, 27 Wyndham entrants it was a physiological extravaganza, a melting pot of the research going on in the different labs around the country.

The Hatter Institute took top honors in the Johnny Van der Walt poster competition by scooping the winner and runner up position. Wits scored a triple victory in the Wyndham session landing all 3 top positions. It was also a landmark for Wits in that for the third successive year they won the Wyndham competition.

This issue of the newsletter focuses on the recently held PSSA meeting. *Kennedy*

## From the PSSA Treasurer PSSA Membership

Dear Members

It is now a month after the PSSA meeting in Cape Town and I promised that I would remind everyone that has not yet paid their membership for 2005 to do so as soon as possible. Members need to realize that payment is important to allow Council to attend to important issues that would benefit the society (discussed at the AGM at the PSSA 2005 meeting). Currently our bank balance is approximately R2000. Very few members have paid for 2005. I would like to thank those that paid during the congress. Unlike this year, the congress fees for 2006 for paid up members will be less than for non-paid up members. I will invite everyone to pay their membership for 2006 in February 2006. Departments who pay for their staff with one cheque should send a list with names of members who they paid for to the secretary/treasurer. Membership forms (from PSSA website) must be completed every year by each member anyway.

### The procedure of payment should be as follows:

1) Member pays money into PSSA account (Use your name as reference)

"PSSA"

ABSA Bank (no branch code necessary)

Account No.: 406 193 4654 (cheque account)

2) Send proof of payment and membership form to the secretary/treasurer by e-mail or fax. Fax: 021-8083145/E-mail: [jvrooy@sun.ac.za](mailto:jvrooy@sun.ac.za)

3) Member will then get an electronic receipt (also serves as membership card) that will also be forwarded to the congress organizers of that particular year. When member registers for the congress this can be used as proof of membership payment together with a copy from secretary/treasurer and will enable lower conference fees.

### Highlights:

- Focus on

PSSA 2005

- Prof J. Koeslag

- Poster winners

- Wyndham

## Prof Johan Koeslag: Recipient of the Lifetime Honorary Membership of the PSSA - 2005

### A Profile of the Man:

Johan Koeslag was born in Witbank. He spent his childhood in Indonesia, Holland, Zululand, and Kenya. He received his secondary schooling in Nairobi, Kenya.

His academic career started at UCT where he was a Lecturer in Physiology from 1971 - 1981. From 1981-1986 he was a senior lecturer in Physiology and Human Biology also at UCT, with a further promotion to Ass Prof in 1987.

In 1982 he was my Hons lecturer, teaching me about muscle physiology and the endocrinology of exercise - both areas of current research for me! We thought of him as our eccentric Prof and he was a dab-hand at overlapping colour transparencies with which he successfully built up our understanding of the complexities of feedback control of the endocrine system.

In 1990, he made a move to become the Head of Medical Physiology, University of Stellenbosch, where he became the leader of many of our current PSSA members. Stellenbosch University awarded him an *Ad Hominem* Full Professorship in 1999.

Johan's PhD thesis was on "Post-exercise ketosis in non-diabetic subjects", and this research was published in the highest rated Physiology journals of the time: *J Physiol* (Lond). Actually, of his 82 full length articles, 7 appeared in this prestigious journal with others in e.g. *NEJM*! Another truly outstanding achievement is to be a Member of the Editorial Board of *Physiological Reviews*, a position he will hold from 2004-2009. *Physiological Reviews* has an impact factor of 36.8 ranking it as no.3 of all science journals.



*Prof Koeslag receiving a certificate from the president of the society, Prof Kathy Myburgh.*

Of course, he has also been a past Vice-President and a past President of the PSSA and we are proud as a Society to honour him with Lifelong Honorary Membership. Our constitution states that:

**“Lifelong Honorary Fellowship** of the Society may be conferred by decision of the Council upon persons who have by virtue of their standing and/or efforts contributed substantially over many years to the Society or have provided meritorious service to the community in pursuits of objectives in line with those of the Society.”

There can be no doubt that he is a deserving recipient of this award! We hope that he will grace us with his knowledge, personality and humour at PSSA's for the foreseeable future.

Kathy Myburgh

### Quotable quote

*“I would rather have a full bottle in front of me than a full frontal lobotomy”*  
Nigel Rees, 1980, Graffiti 2, Unwin paperbacks, UK.

## STUDENTS SHINE AT 2005 PSSA!

**Wyndham** Presenters in the top 10 were given special mention in 2005, since the standard was so high:

**Special Mention: Appreciation for Excellence**

Students ranked 4-10 in alphabetical order:

**Yumna Albertus-Kajee** (MRC/UCT Exercise Science and Sports Medicine Unit)

**Anna Chan** (UCT Hatter Institute for Cardiovascular Research)

**Raul Correia** (CV Pathophysiology & Genomics Unit, WITS)

**Joe-Lin du Toit** (Dept Physiological Sciences, Stellenbosch University)

**James Smith** (MRC/UCT Exercise Science and Sports Medicine Unit)

**Siyanda Makuala** (UCT Hatter Institute for Cardiovascular Research)

**Wayne Smith** (Dept Medical Physiology, Stellenbosch Univ. Med School)

**3<sup>rd</sup> prize: Shaheen Fajander** (Brain Function Unit, WITS)

**Runner-up: Juliane Weber** (Brain Function Unit, WITS)

**Wyndham Award winner:**

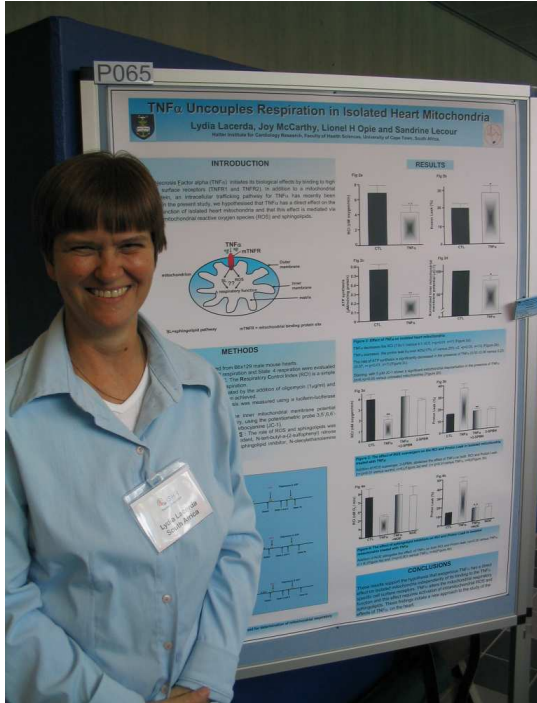
**Demitri Veliotes** (CV Pathophysiology & Genomics Unit, WITS)

## Johnny van der Walt Poster Award:

**Runner-up: Makhosazane Zungu** (UCT Hatter Institute for Cardiovascular Research)

**Winner: Lydia Lacerda** (UCT Hatter Institute for Cardiovascular Research)

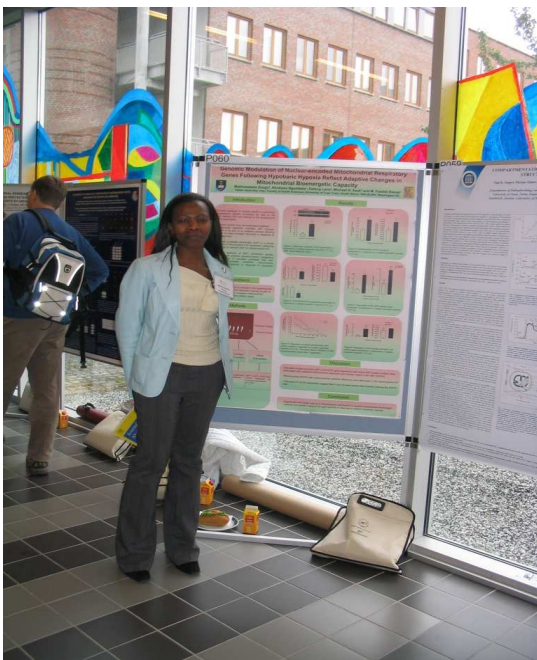
## The Johnny Van Der Walt poster competition



*Ms Lydia Lacerda stands beside her winning poster*

*Ms Lydia Lacerda from the Hatter Institute was this year's winner of the poster competition, she speaks out:*

"It was an honour to receive the Best Student Poster Award at the recently held congress of the PSSA held here in Cape Town. The work for the poster was part of my Master's degree and winning the poster award was a real incentive for me to continue to work hard and discover more! To win an award among one's peers is really motivating. Science, especially the on-going research into lessening the mortality rate of heart attacks is a fascinating subject for me and each little step of progress brings its own reward of personal satisfaction. I'd like to give my heartfelt thanks to my supervisor, Dr Sandrine Lecour, who inspires all her students with her enthusiasm and knowledge. I should also like to thank the organising committee of the PSSA for the great congress and for my prize. I look forward to the next congress and to the exchange of knowledge, views and ideas that give us all food for thought!"



*Ms Zungu proudly displays her poster*

*Ms Makhosazane Zungu also from the Hatter Institute shares her sentiments on her success in the poster competition:*

"For me receiving the runner-up poster award was not only a reflection on the quality of my research endeavours but more about encouragement to continue to pose pertinent scientific questions and to pursue goal-orientated research relevant to the health needs of this country. I am most grateful to the PSSA Organizing Committee and honored to have been granted the opportunity to present my work. The chance to share ideas with my peers and pioneers in the interesting and challenging area of Cardiovascular Research was a rewarding experience and as such this award could not have come at a more crucial time of my academic career".

## The Wyndham Competition: A Wits affair!



*The winning team. Standing from left : Shaheen Fajandar, Julianne Weber, Demetri Veloites and Prof Helen Laburn head of the School of Physiology (with a glass of Cape Town's finest bubbly raised high...Well done Wits!).*

### The Wyndam Experience By Shaheen Fajandar

To be honest when I heard it was PSSA time again I was disgruntled. It was time to prepare, to stress and to rehearse a 10 minute presentation which ultimately becomes the only thing you say morning, day and night. Finally the long-awaited day comes and with sweaty palms and a dry throat I got to have my say in front of some of the most brilliant physiological minds in the country. The competition was stiff, with each and every participant giving it their all, I never thought I would even be a contender. So after a long, stressful and tiring day the only thing I wanted to do was relax, and then I heard my name being called out as the recipient of the 'most promising talk' category. I did not realise what a big deal it was until I saw the joy and pride on the faces of the members of the school of Physiology and the head of the school giving you a hug which leaves you gasping for breath was a good indicator of how big a deal this was. While I would like to take full credit for this achievement I know that it was all thanks to my amazing, helpful and encouraging supervisors, Dr Irné du Plessis and Prof Helen Laburn, who (among other things) reminded me to slow down and to use the laser pointer.

After the excitement, champagne toasts and photo shoots, with my certificate in hand I realized two things: that I had not combed my hair and that even though it was a lot of work, it was totally worth it!

## A Special word from the President of the PSSA to the Core Organisers of the PSSA conference

Dear Zig, Ed and Marta and your teams

On behalf of the PSSA Members I would like to thank you sincerely for providing us with such a stimulating event this year. It was truly great to have such depth of high quality student speakers. Thank you for your patience with my emphasis on this section. Your conference will always be remembered for that. Despite the large numbers (which caused many a delegate trepidation beforehand), the day was quite riveting from beginning to end.

It was another highlight for us to be able to listen to some top class guest speakers who do not always attend PSSA. It is certainly also a healthy sign for our organisation that we were able to over-fill one of the presentation rooms!

The programme with the abstracts will be referred to many a time over the next year until it is superseded by the next one. As an organisation, we were also very happy to be able to impress the President of the MRC with the programme and a full-enough auditorium. Your conference will also be remembered for his address, since it may be a long time before we can persuade him to come again (if ever).

Thank you also for fostering the relationship with Lasec that was started the year before. I believe that we have consolidated them in our corner for a while to come.

Long live Physiology which is, after all, the basis for all the sub-disciplines in which we find ourselves immersed!

Best wishes for the rest of the busy year. (I hope you get some sleep Zig, being a new Dad during the PSSA added a unique challenge!)

Kathy

### Outside looking in!

Professor Philip Odonkor was one of the invited key note speakers his message to the PSSA is: "The conference was very well organised. Nothing was left to chance The travel and lodging arrangements were superb! Arrangements at the venue were adequate and commendable. Facilities for data projection were faultless. (*This is an area where a lot of conferences fail*).

The presentations were of a very high standard. I was very impressed with the quality of the *Wyndham presentations*. I congratulate all the brilliant students. They were confident, articulate, and well-informed. With the type of work our students are doing I believe the future of Physiology in our part of the world is very bright.

I will like to send a special word of thanks to the organizing committee for inviting me to the conference. I enjoyed every bit of the conference. It was as fascinating and exciting as it was academically/professionally stimulating and challenging. They did a marvellous job!!!

I am certainly looking forward to many more such opportunities for Physiologists to get together to share useful information: information that will contribute to our efforts to bring health to all our people. To this end let me assure you and all colleagues that I am available and willing to contribute, in all ways possible, to keep Physiology in the centre stage of our sustainable development effort.

Please accept my best wishes and the assurances of my continued interest in the work of the PSSA. *Please do not hesitate to let me know if there is anything I could do to further the work of the PSSA and Physiology in the subregion.*

Warmest regards.

Philip

**Prof P.O. ODonkor** BSc MB ChB PhD (McGill)

**Founding Dean Faculty of Health Sciences, P.O.Roma 180, LESOTHO.**

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PSSA on the Web!

Visit:

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### And finally ....

We are still waiting for you to write in with articles for inclusion in the next issue of the newsletter. Please send us any items of news that you may have; student awards, promotions appointments, vacancies, updates on your research etc.

To all the students writing exams at this time of the year..GOOD LUCK and we look forward to hearing from you at **PSSA 2006 in Durban!**

Kennedy, Andrea and Alta.

The Official Constitution of the Physiology Society of Southern Africa can be found on the internet, at the PSSA website:

<http://academic.sun.ac.za/medphys/pssa.htm> Just click on "Constitution" and you can view the entire unabridged legal document.

Please take time to go over the constitution and check for any mistakes.

PHYSIOLOGY SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

