

OFFICIAL STATEMENT

South African Burn Society (SABS) Executive Committee (EXCO) statement 13 December 2017

The current SABS EXCO notes with some concern the recent formation of the South African Burn Association (SABA). Whilst to date no official notification has been received by SABS, it has come to our attention that disgruntled former members of SABS (and of the past EXCO) have formed this new organization. We openly acknowledge that this is within the constitutional rights of any citizen of South Africa, but also realize that the existence of two organizations with very similar names; vision and mission within the same country has the potential to cause confusion amongst the national and international burns communities. Thus we, the current SABS EXCO, believe that it is important to release this statement in order to bring clarity as well as dispel any confusion or misconceptions.

We clearly state that:

- 1) SABA currently is not associated with nor affiliated to the South African Burn Society (nor by extension current SABS members). We remain committed to partnering with any organization that actively advances and improves the care of Burn survivors in South Africa. We do not oppose the formation of a breakaway organization as we firmly believe that healthcare professionals should associate with an organization of their choice (i.e. freedom of movement and association, as set out in our country's constitution).
- 2) The election of the current EXCO was in accordance with the SABS constitution. The constitution was amended and updated this year after circulation to all members of the immediate past-EXCO for approval, which included many of the founding members of the new association. Comments and changes were invited from all EXCO members and these were duly incorporated into the current constitution. The new constitution was approved by all immediate past-EXCO members. The election of the current EXCO was then held according to the SABS constitution. Whilst we may seem to be labouring the point, we wish to conclusively dispel the notion that the election process was in any way orchestrated or manipulated. Every member of the current SABS EXCO remains a committed and independent burn care professional. We are justifiably proud of the diversity of the current EXCO: PhD graduates, nursing professionals, private surgeons, physiotherapists, state surgeons and heads of department are all represented in our team.
- 3) The current SABS constitution is inclusive and allows for differences in opinion. We recognize that given the diversity of our members, disagreement and/or unhappiness around decisions made or decision-making processes is not unexpected. We do however expect that concerns and grievances will be voiced to allow engagement, discussion and ultimately resolution.

There is a general understanding amongst professionals that unless concerns etc are raised, it can be assumed that involved parties agree with proceedings and decisions.

- 4) We acknowledge the pivotal role of trade in partnering with us to advance burn care in South Africa, but as the current SABS EXCO we also openly declare that there is no conflict of interest. As stated previously, we remain independent burn care professionals. This means that as elected members of the SABS EXCO we continue to rely on our own knowledge; understanding and experience to inform our judgment and decisions (relating both to burn care and to business).
- 5) The SABS EXCO remains committed to our vision and mission as laid out in the SABS constitution (www.saburnsociety.co.za). Furthermore we remain ethical in all our dealings and endeavours which encompass academic contributions and publications, educational activities including the Emergency Management of Severe Burns (EMSB) teaching platform, international representation on the International Society for Burn Injuries (ISBI) and Pan-African Burn Society (PABS), as well as ongoing local activities including advancement of the online Burns database and the drive for skin donation. Because the well-being of the Burn survivor remains our foremost priority, we will not be distracted by political agendas or professional ambitions from either inside or outside the South African Burn Society.

Yours respectfully,

Dr Ethel Andrews (PhD, RN)

SABS President

