



FROM THE DESK OF THE PRESIDENT

Professor Ismail Borat

9 December 2024

Dear Colleague

Trust you are well

Time has really flown and we are already at almost the end of the year. We had an extremely successful 41st SASOG Congress in August and a big thank you to the University of Pretoria for hosting and organising this fantastic Congress. Many of you will soon be embarking on a well deserved leave and vacation. Enjoy but please keep safe.

SASOG has seen momentous changes over the past 6 months. In summary SASOG through a Council resolution in July 2024 undertook to attempt to unify Obstetrics and Gynaecology in this country- through amalgamation and incorporation of GMG with SASOG - a One society One system policy- to improve efficiency, prevent duplication of roles, improve accountability, improve service delivery and to reduce the fee structure. GMG made the decision not to incorporate or amalgamate into SASOG. This created an opportunity for SASOG to usher in a new era in its illustrious almost 70 year existence which will propel SASOG to even greater heights- an all encompassing new independent SASOG operated and managed by a dedicated, energetic and focussed leadership, Council, its committees and subcommittees serving the Society for the honour and privilege.

SASOG established and developed a new **Private Practice Business unit (PPBU)** run by a dynamic, focussed and enthusiastic team led by a brilliant duo, Dr Sagie Naidu

who is a Past Hon Secretary of SASOG and Dr Peet Potgieter, the current Hon Treasurer.

The core values of the propositions of the PPBU as contained in the PPBU booklet written by Dr Sagie Naidu are amongst others.

- 1 Increased remuneration -which will involve funder negotiations advocating for increased and fair payment for procedures and consultations, transparent reporting, talk with one recognised SASOG unified voice representing all specialists, and focus on the intricacies of the healthcare billing system understanding the specific challenges of O&G billing.
- 2 Practice administrative support
- 3 Financial Planning and Legal Support
- 4 Continuing Professional Development and much more

The SASOG Protection Fund was preliminarily launched at the SASOG Congress in Sun City in August 2024. The fund in effect was set-up to counter the "litigation abuse" sustained on our profession over the last decade and a half, and a realisation that our profession has been at the receiving end of major financial burden in this space, with no data provided and no transparency by insurers. The fund will ensure professional autonomy, financial sustainability, transparency and excellence in patient care. As I said in my Presidential address at the SASOG Congress that from a medicolegal perspective "enough is enough" and we need to take ownership of our destiny and keep it in our own hands. The response and appetite for the fund from our membership in the profession has been enthusiastic and fantastic. Our

membership understands that the current trajectory with insurance and subscriptions is unsustainable in the long term and there is much appreciation for the joint efforts of the SASOG Protection Fund team to establish the fund which is not-for-profit and an attempt to normalise what is an anomalous scenario in this space, be transparent and hopefully alter the medicolegal trajectory of our profession in this country and make it sustainable to practice our profession.

This newsletter will give an update on 3 issues: the 2 major projects undertaken by SASOG which are gamechangers and in essence encapsulates the new vision and the forward thinking mantra of the new independent SASOG which will propel SASOG to even greater heights, and thirdly update membership on the transition to the all inclusive independent SASOG.

1. SASOG Protection Fund:

I thought it best to get everyone up to date with progression on the fund, preliminary timelines and the final steps involved.

In terms of a provisional timeline of events for the fund please see the below:

- 1 We are currently busy gathering information on the risk profiles of potential members via the "pre-application form".
- 2 We are planning on sending out an FAQ (frequently asked questions) document in the coming weeks to debunk prominent "myths" regarding the fund and current malpractice cover in the market.
- 3 We are also working on a potential member risk classification framework, to be used/followed when evaluating whether a member is eligible to join the SASOG Fund. This is to try minimize

onboarding members who do not seem to comply with SASOG's clinical guidelines. Remember in terms of subscriptions the SASOG Protection Fund will come in at much lower subscription rates envisaged at 25-30% lower than current insurer models.

The Fund structure will be finalised and registered by January/February 2025, whereafter the necessary operational infrastructure will be actioned and communicated.

In the past 6 months, our team has experienced blowback, as expected, by current players in the market regarding the fund solutions but little to none of the comments received from these parties have looked at acknowledging and much less addressing the real existential issue that the fund aims to solve. However from my side I remain committed to addressing the existential crisis facing our profession and to ensure the viability for future generations of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists in South Africa. This is part of my vision for the Society.

2. Update on PPBU

PPBU Co-chairs: Dr Sagie Naidu and Dr Peet Potgieter

The SASOG Private Practice Business Unit (PPBU) which is enthusiastically and efficiently led by Co-Chairs Dr Sagie Naidu and Dr Peet Potgieter have been working at full steam acting in the best interests of all our members. The main goals are to **improve practice efficiency** and to **negotiate better remuneration** for the vital services we provide.

Recent Activities and Updates

- **Engagement with Healthman:**

We have partnered with Healthman to conduct a detailed **RVU analysis**, which will support our efforts to negotiate improved remuneration with funders.

- **Negotiations with Funders:**

A dedicated team has been formed to engage with experienced professionals to negotiate remuneration improvements on your behalf.

- **Practice Management and Coding Workshop:**

We are planning an in-person and hybrid Practice Management and Coding Workshop for **January 2025**. Details will be shared soon!

Save the date! This will be a valuable opportunity for learning and networking.

- **Interactive Webinars - "SASOG Private Practice Matters!":**

Beginning in January 2025, we will host a **weekly interactive webinar** focusing on key topics such as billing, coding, practice administration, health legal compliance, medicolegal issues, tax and estate planning, and practitioner wellness. The logistics for this exciting initiative are currently being finalized, and we will provide more details soon.

3. Transition Feedback to the all inclusive independent SASOG:

Dr Peet Potgieter Hon SASOG Treasurer is heading the transition.

When the new council took over in May we had many challenges to address leading to some big changes being made but now we are excited for what the new year will bring. Getting our accounting and budgeting systems in place was one of our focus areas and we are now rolling out our new budgeting planning forms for all the committees as well as CPD events and we

believe when this is up and running it will improve our planning and execution of all the various functions of SASOG in the future.

The new COO position is giving us a lot more options in the running of SASOG and it is obvious that over time this office will become the nucleus around which the day to day functioning of SASOG would revolve.

The Private Practice Business Unit (PPBU) has been a revelation in how keen everyone is to have an impact and to realise how much knowledge and experience is available for us to tap into. Understanding what our members needs are and where we can have the biggest impact to help and support our private practice members is our primary focus. The reality hits hard when someone starts out in private practice and no one tells you how to choose staff, which EMR to use, financial planning for tax and retirement , malpractice insurance etc and our members feel lost in all of this. This is what the PPBU wants to address, to be the resource you can go to in order to get the solutions for the above problems. Thats the idea behind our first in- person and online practice weekend planned for the end of January as well as the bi-weekly online webinars (Private Practice Matters) that will be starting in January.

The feedback on the new debit order sign up process has been very positive and everything is gearing up nicely for the new debit orders to kick in at the beginning of the new year. When everything is going to be unified under the SASOG banner from January onwards, we will be much better positioned to respond to members concerns and requests for help and

support. We want to get to a point where member communication becomes interactive with SASOG in an online support community facilitated by SASOG.

We have finalized our financial statements for the 2024 period and with wise investment decisions and good governance we are still in a good fiscal position to support the mandate of our members going into 2025. With SASOG managing it's own membership income and invoicing from January our hope is that over time we will be able increase our support of the obstetrics and gynaecology fraternity and in the process improve the playing field for everyone involved in this discipline.

Many thanks to the tireless work of SASOG Exco, Council, committees and subcommittees who ensure a smooth and efficiently functioning SASOG and who all serve the Society for the honour and privilege.

This is the last newsletter for 2024 and we are looking forward to an exciting, prosperous and strengthened all-independent SASOG for 2025.

Wishing you all a blessed, wonderful and safe festive season and a wonderful new year.

Warm regards

Prof Ismail Borat
SASOG President