

NEWS LETTER

IN PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE



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Empowering Excellence, Advocating Integrity. SAMLA - Shaping the Future of Medico-Legal Standards in South Africa.

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NEWS LETTER

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Dear SAMLA Members,

As we approach Mandela Day on 18 July 2026, we are reminded of the enduring legacy of service, compassion, and community upliftment left by former President Nelson Mandela. Mandela Day presents an opportunity for each of us to make a meaningful contribution towards improving the lives of others, whether through our time, skills, resources, or acts of kindness.

We encourage all SAMLA members to embrace the spirit of Mandela Day by dedicating 67 minutes of service to a cause that promotes positive change within our communities. Collectively, our efforts can make a lasting difference and help build a more equitable and caring society.

Thank you for your continued support and for the difference you make in the lives of others.

Warm Regards,



Maryke Pienaar

Editor, SAMLA Newsletter

In Loving Memory of Christa Koelewyn

It is with deep sadness that we share the sudden passing of our dear friend and colleague, Christa Koelewyn, on 29 June 2026.

Christa's journey with the South African Medico Legal Association (SAML A) began in 2000, the very year the Association was established. For more than two decades, she was an integral part of SAML A, serving our members with exceptional professionalism, dedication, and unwavering commitment.

Many members will remember Christa not only for her efficiency and extensive knowledge, but also for her kindness, patience, and genuine willingness to assist. She greeted every challenge with grace and every person with warmth, leaving a lasting impression on all who had the privilege of working with her.

Christa's contribution to SAML A extended far beyond her role. She became a trusted colleague, a valued friend, and a familiar, reassuring presence to generations of members. Her legacy will continue to be reflected in the strength of the Association she helped build and support over so many years.

We extend our heartfelt condolences to Christa's family, friends, and loved ones during this difficult time. Our thoughts are also with the many SAML A members and colleagues whose lives she touched over the years.

Christa will be deeply missed, fondly remembered, and forever appreciated. May her memory be a source of comfort, and may it bring a smile to our faces as we remember the kindness, dedication, and warmth she shared so generously with us all.

Rest in peace, Christa. Your legacy will remain part of the heart of SAML A.

Welcome to Melanie Ramsamy & Marilyn Keegan

The South African Medico-Legal Association (SAML A) is pleased to welcome Melanie Ramsamy and Marilyn Keegan to the SAML A administrative team.

Melanie joins us following the retirement of Christa Koelewyn and will be assisting with the day-to-day administration of the Association. We are delighted to have her on board and look forward to her contribution to SAML A and its members.

SAML A's growth is also seen in the appointment of a third support person who will focus on communication. Marilyn Keegan commenced her duties with SAML A on the 1st July 2026, a journalist by profession.

We extend a warm welcome to Melanie and Marilyn and wish them every success in their new roles. We trust that they will enjoy a rewarding and fulfilling journey with the SAML A family.

Welcome, Melanie and Marilyn!

Positive feedback from the foundation course Module 1 and 2

SAML A has received good feedback and successfully completed Modules 1 and 2 of the Foundation Course, marking another important milestone in our commitment to education and professional development.

This year, 120 students registered for the course, reflecting the growing interest in medico-legal education and the continued success of the programme.

The feedback SAML A received highlighted the high standard of presentations, the practical relevance of the content, and the valuable learning experience provided to participants.

The Foundation Course continues to play an important role in equipping practitioners with the knowledge and skills required in the medico-legal field. Delegates particularly appreciated the expertise, dedication, and willingness of the presenters to share their knowledge and experience. SAML A extends its gratitude to all the presenters who contributed their time and expertise to the success of the programme. A special word of thanks is extended to Prof Henry Lerm for his leadership, commitment, and invaluable contribution to the Foundation Course.

We look forward to the continued success of this educational initiative and to welcoming participants to future modules.

As SAMLA continues its quest to reach out to all provinces in South Africa, we are especially pleased to acknowledge the ongoing support of the Limpopo Department of Health, which is now in its third consecutive year of enrolling participants in the Foundation Course. During the first two years, a total of 88 students from the Limpopo Department of Health participated in the programme. This year, 38 students from the Limpopo Division are currently enrolled and actively participating.

The continued partnership with the Limpopo Department of Health demonstrates a shared commitment to strengthening knowledge and promoting best practices in the medico-legal field. By investing in education, participants are better equipped to navigate the complexities of medico-legal practice and contribute to improved healthcare outcomes.

SAMLA extends its appreciation to all the presenters, facilitators, organisers, and participants whose dedication and enthusiasm have contributed to the success of the course. We look forward to the completion of the remaining modules and to welcoming many more healthcare professionals to future Foundation Courses as we continue to build capacity and excellence within the medico-legal community.

Module 3

The interaction between Medical Law and Ethics

The third module of the South African Medico-Legal Association's (SAMLA) Foundations Course – part of its Education and Training Programme – presented on 11 July, drew 113 healthcare professionals for a full day of thought-provoking discussions on ethics, informed consent, end-of-life care and clinical decision-making.

Moderated by SAMLA National Chairperson Professor Ethelwynn Stellenberg, the programme opened with an engaging presentation by ethicist Dr Willem Moore, who unpacked the ethical foundations underpinning clinical practice in South Africa. Drawing on the Health Professions Council of South Africa's Core Ethical Values and Standards for Good Practice and the General Ethical Guidelines for Healthcare Professionals, he explored the philosophical principles that inform ethical decision-making in healthcare.

Dr Moore examined the moral, philosophical and practical dimensions of clinical ethics, explaining how ethical reasoning shapes interactions between healthcare practitioners and patients. He highlighted the importance of balancing competing interests while promoting patient welfare and emphasised that respect for patient autonomy remains one of the cornerstones of ethical healthcare.

Patients, he said, have the right to make informed decisions based on their own beliefs, values and preferences, while healthcare professionals have a duty to support those choices. He also cautioned against paternalistic approaches that undermine patients' right to self-determination.

The theoretical framework was followed by a practical perspective from Dr/Adv Santa-Maria Venter, both an advocate and orthopaedic surgeon, who illustrated through clinical and legal case studies how ethical principles are applied in everyday medical practice. Her presentation demonstrated the complex interplay between ethical obligations, professional judgement and legal accountability.

Following the tea break, Ms Desiree David, Senior Lecturer in Criminal and Procedural Law at Nelson Mandela University, delivered an engaging presentation on informed consent. Addressing one of the most challenging areas of healthcare law, she explored the legal requirements for obtaining valid consent and examined the consequences when communication between practitioner and patient breaks down. The session generated lively discussion, with delegates drawing on their own clinical experiences to debate the practical challenges encountered in healthcare settings.

Surgeon Dr Johan von Willich then turned the spotlight on cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), challenging commonly held perceptions about its success. His evidence-based presentation examined the realities of resuscitation outcomes, particularly in out-of-hospital settings, and underscored the importance of informed discussions with patients and families regarding expectations and end-of-life decision-making.

The module concluded with a compelling presentation by Professor H. Lerm, SAMLA Director and Chairperson of Education and Training, who explored the complex and often controversial subject of euthanasia. Examining the ethical, legal and clinical dimensions of physician-assisted dying, Professor Lerm encouraged participants to consider one of modern medicine's most challenging debates through a balanced and thought-provoking lens.

The breadth of topics, the calibre of the presenters and the lively audience engagement ensured that delegates remained fully immersed throughout the day, reinforcing SAMLA's commitment to providing education on the medico-legal issues shaping contemporary healthcare practice.

Save the date: SAML A Conference 2026

The Human Factor in Medical Error: Ethics, Accountability and the Law Beyond Technology

The South African Medico-Legal Association (SAML A) is pleased to announce that registrations are now open for the SAML A National Conference 2026, taking place from 8–10 October 2026.

This year's conference, themed "The Human Factor in Medical Error: Ethics, Accountability and the Law Beyond Technology," will bring together healthcare professionals, legal practitioners, academics, policymakers, and other stakeholders to explore one of the most important challenges facing modern healthcare.

As technology continues to transform clinical practice, the conference will examine the critical role of human judgement, ethical decision-making, professional accountability, and the legal implications of medical error. Through expert presentations, panel discussions, and interactive sessions, delegates will have the opportunity to engage with current issues at the intersection of medicine, ethics, and the law.

Early Bird Registration

Delegates are encouraged to register early to take advantage of discounted Early Bird rates, available until 31 July 2026.

Registration Fees

SAML A paid-up members: R3,200

Non-members: R4,250

Whether you are a returning delegate or attending for the first time, the SAML A National Conference offers an exceptional opportunity to gain valuable insights, share knowledge, and connect with colleagues committed to advancing medico-legal practice in South Africa.

Mark your calendars for 8–10 October 2026 and join us for what promises to be a thought-provoking and impactful conference. We look forward to welcoming you.

MESSAGE FROM THE NATIONAL CHAIRPERSON

Dear members,

This has been a year of significant development, and it is remarkable how swiftly time has passed.

SAMLA has had a significant year, characterised by notable developments, positive progress, and the appointment of journalist Marilyn Keegan. Regrettably, this period was also marked by the sudden passing of our esteemed administrative officer, Christa, on 29 June 2026, following more than 26 years of dedicated service to SAMLA. Her passing is a profound loss to the organisation. Christa was a steadfast and valued member of SAMLA, whose commitment and service will be remembered with deep appreciation. She retired on 30 April 2026 and passed away two months later.

On behalf of all our members and friends, we extend our deepest condolences to Piet, Christa's husband, as well as to her children, grandchildren, and extended family. May our Heavenly Father grant them comfort and strength during this time of profound loss.

Prof Ethelwynn L Stellenberg
National Chairperson.

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