

HITSA Chairperson's Report – AGM 5 September 2023

Our last AGM was held on 6 April 2022. The past 16 months have seen us sustain our activity with townhalls and an all-day Theatre of Errors workshop, held in Paarl, during November 2022.

Our townhalls have covered some interesting ground, including experts on decision science, dealing with grieving families, finding balance as a leader, an improvement project journey, a view from a personal injury lawyer, patient flow and improving efficiencies in the peri-operative period, the application of lean principles in private sector ORs in ZA, and an interesting Introduction to the philosophy of Ikigai – finding purpose and weaving it into one's leadership and management.

Our Theatre of Errors workshop included plenaries from experts in crisis communication, measurement and monitoring of safety, and an experienced advocate took us through managing the aftermath of a preventable error. The small group sessions used practical examples to explore the development of safety checklists to address local challenges; an industrial engineer workshopped best practice for huddles; an oncological surgeon helped unpack consent, and the Theatre of Errors predictably demonstrated the safety value from well communicating teams.

It would be easy to pat ourselves on the back, and say the job has been well done, but I feel that heading towards our formal 4th "birthday", we definitely have some improvements to consider:

- ◆ Firstly, theatre teams are comprised of mainly nurses, surgeons and anaesthetists. We have attracted some surgeons by invitation, mainly to present in our gatherings, but we have only one or two signed up as members. The rest of us work with surgeons every day, yet somehow, we have not managed to convince them of the importance and value of joining a community of colleagues in the operating room and procedural space. We would do well to consider what we are not doing, and what we can change to attract and retain these key colleagues.

- ◆ Secondly, I have been amazed and impressed with my colleagues on the committee, not only with their ability to capture interesting insights in the newsletters they write, often reflecting them grappling with challenges in the leadership spaces they occupy, but also, with the speakers they manage to pull out of their realms. The breadth of different ideas, and fields they have managed to pull from over the past 18 months, and especially over the past 4 years, blows me away; especially as the “idea pool” is from just 6 committee members of this much bigger community. My point is this: the pool is large and we require more swimmers!

Both of these areas call for us to broaden the participation in HITSA, and every member and attendee at our meetings will have surgeons to lobby and encourage to get involved in HITSA, and I am sure that everyone who has had even fleeting contact with HITSA via a townhall or a workshop, has a network of contacts as impressive as those that the committee has plumbed. My call as we enter our 5th year, is that colleagues feel safe to step forward and put their hands up to write about something that either bothers them, that they have overcome, or that they feel the community should consider. All of our musings that turn into a newsletter are read and edited by our capable deputy chairperson, who it turns out is not only a capable editor but also an excellent ghost writer, and manages to convert an idea into something well written.

The final learning from the year came from our planned Theatre of Errors workshop, at the SASA National Congress in Bloemfontein, which failed to attract enough participants to stage, and we cancelled it a few weeks before. As with all failures, there were lessons to learn. Some of these included: that there was too much competition on the workshop day, as well as it being a weekday when many working teams (and especially nurses) would be unable to attend. So, our next Theatre of Errors workshop will be on a Saturday, and a stand-alone event on 18 November in Gauteng!

My wish is that this next year is one when more colleagues from our community put up their hands, to share experience from their workspace and mobilise their connections to share their insights and expertise with this special community of peri-operative leaders.



My special thanks go to Gareth Davies, our vice-chairperson, who not only keeps the organisation on track but also so comfortably hosts the townhalls. We finally have some funds for our Treasurer Andre Roux to speak about, Vuyokazi November has been a real treasure with her newsletter musings, and her contribution to the committee, townhalls and Theatre of Errors. Nina Watson stepped up to join the group after Carina Griessel asked to be replaced, and this small group of 6 has done us proud over the past 16 months – Thanks Team!

Dr Anthony Reed

HITSA Chairperson