



DOCUMENT: SAMPS9702ENG

THE SOUTH AFRICAN MEDICAL PHYSICS SOCIETY

The South African Association of Physicists in Medicine and Biology (SAAPMB) was founded in 1960. In 1987 it became mandatory in South Africa for Hospital Physicists to register with the then South African Medical and Dental Council (SAMDC), along with other Health Care Professionals, and the scope and responsibilities of the Medical Physicist (Ionising Radiation) was defined. As a result, the training and competence of Medical Physicists was standardised, and Medical Physicists were employed under the same Code of Ethics applied to all Health workers in South Africa.

Since SAAPMB members include all professionals with an interest in Physics in the Medical and Biological fields, the Group of Medical Physicists within the SAAPMB changed its name to the South African Medical Physics Society (SAMPS) in 1993. One of the membership requirements is registration with the SAMDC as a Medical Physicist (Ionising Radiation). The SAMPS consists of:

an Executive Committee,
a Professional Committee,
a Public Relations Committee, and
an IOMP member.

Currently, Medical Physicists are represented by two elected members on the Professional Board of Medical Scientists within the SAMDC. The SAMDC is in a process of transformation and in the near future it will be called the Health Professions Council of South Africa. In the new dispensation Medical Physicists and Medical Scientists will be incorporated within the Medical and Dental Professional Board. Medical Physicists and Medical Scientists will then be represented by one elected member on this Board. On the Medical Science Management Committee, Medical Physicists will be represented by one elected member.

The training of Medical Physicists can only be done at institutions recognised by the SAMDC. The training programme consists of a theoretical component and experiential training. Both components include the following disciplines :

Medical Physics in Radiotherapy
Medical Physics in Nuclear Medicine
Medical Physics in Radiology
Radiation Protection

The training of Medical Physicists occurs over a minimum period of three years after obtaining a three year degree with Physics as major.

At present, six Universities are allowed to offer the academic component of the training, and seven State Hospitals are recognised as training Institutes for the experiential component. The Universities have some autonomy in setting up the Medical Physics courses and method of examination. However, minimum requirements are set by the SAMDC Professional Board. The State Hospitals

recognised to train Student Medical Physicists also have to be adequately equipped to do so.

The SAMPS is the only body in South Africa which officially represents Medical Physics professionals, a small community consisting of approximately 90 members which are primarily employed by Universities, Technicons and State Hospitals although a few are involved in private practice. The Public Relations Committee strives to promote the profession in the local public by maintaining contact with scholars and under-graduate students. The IOMP member is elected to represent South African Medical Physicists at the IOMP Council Meetings (held every three years), and to provide feedback on international events, policies and developments of interest. The SAMPS has as one of its aims to promote the Medical Physics profession in Africa through co-operation with and provision of expert advice to peers in other developing countries. Some South African Medical Physics departments are already involved in such ventures.

Changes taking place in South Africa have become a challenge to all skilled professionals. Health and Education Policies are being revised which affect the conditions of service and responsibilities of Medical Physicists. The SAMPS will be instrumental in defending the interests of this community, such that the standard of training and research, and the vital input of the Medical Physicist in Radiation Medicine, is not compromised.