



## NEWSLETTER - MAY 2017

### SURGICOM MEMBERSHIP SOARS AHEAD

During the past 12 months, Surgicom membership has risen from 160 to 254 surgeons, an increase of 58%. The chief factor is participation in the Surgicom - Discovery Governance Pilot. This makes Surgicom stronger and better able to represent the interests of surgeons as well as making us financially sound with no immediate need to raise additional funds.

### WILL A QUALITY BASED PAYMENT REPLACE FEE FOR SERVICE?

There is a strong move towards alternative re-imburement models to move away from the current fee for service system. One alternative that is gaining ground is a system based on rewarding specialists for quality and efficiency, with a preferential fee based on that individual specialists' profile. The question is: "how will quality or efficiency score be determined and will it be reliable?" At this stage it is vital that surgeons directly participate in this process rather than simply leaving the matter to the funders, based on information largely gathered from claims data and hospital accounts. Hospitals frequently code incorrectly. Claims data can never complete the picture. Without some clinical input, the evaluation is flawed from the outset. If ever there was a reason to participate in the Surgicom - Discovery Pilot this is it.

Surely quality care should be rewarded, and a great deal of science and effort is going into ways to measure it objectively with appropriate risk-adjustments based on individual practice profiles. Put very simply, quality care is all about the best clinical outcomes at the lowest overall cost. In the near future it is very likely that funders will be directing patients to surgeons with the best efficiency scores and paying a premium to surgeons who achieve high scores.

Discovery Health Medical Scheme have proven themselves to be the industry's leader. They are one of the main drivers of this process but are very keen to include surgeons in the development. It is vital that every surgeon takes the opportunity to participate in the Surgicom-Discovery Pilot. The initial profiles based on 2015 claims and hospital data are now available to all surgeons but the prospective data going forward will be far more accurate as a result of the discharge summaries. For 2015, the system determined whether a DVT occurred based on whether an anticoagulant was claimed for in the post-operative period, but is this accurate? A post-operative infection is assumed to have occurred if antibiotics were claimed for. Hospital re-admissions carry a lot of weight in efficiency scoring but not all of these re-admissions are procedure related. The more clinical information that surgeons provide, the better for all surgeons. The discharge summary has been designed with exactly this in mind: to capture the important data but to do so rapidly and efficiently.

**Quality based re-imburement is the future. All surgeons need to participate in this process now to understand it and shape its development. Surgicom members have an easy and unique opportunity through the Pilot project.**

### HOW TO ACCESS YOUR PROFILE

All surgeons can download a detailed analysis of their efficiencies in respect of the five procedures being studied in the Surgicom Pilot, based on data collected by Discovery Health in 2015. Go to the Discovery Health ID site <https://www.discovery.co.za/portal/provider/health-id>. Log in with your user name and password. The click on "Reports" in the first box on the left. Choose "Practice quality report" to download the PDF.

### NO SURGICOM FEE INCREASES FOR 2017

One of the spin-offs of the increase in memberships is that we will not need to increase fees in 2017 so everyone benefits. Monthly fees remain R710. Completing two Discovery Discharge Summaries a month more than covers this. In 2016 we had to pay R1000 per member towards the costs of various legal actions being pursued by SAPPF but there is no anticipation of the need for this during the the next 12 months.

### INVESTEC SPONSORSHIP FOR SURGICOM WEBSITE

Investec are now sponsoring the Surgicom Website on a trial basis. Please visit the website and click on the link to Investec as the number of "hits" will determine the sustainability of this arrangement.

### Dr THELANI LOWAN JOINS THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF SURGICOM

We are pleased to announce that Dr Thelani Lowan, a general surgeon from Polokwane has been appointed as a director of Surgicom.

Thelani is a graduate of the University of Natal who holds an MMed(Surgery) from Medunsa. He is in full-time private practice at Limpopo Mediclinic in Polokwane.

Dr\_Thelani\_Lowan.JPG



### BONITAS NOW REIMBURSE LAPAROSCOPIC APPENDICECTOMY

As a direct result of the Laparoscopic Appendectomy Pilot Study conducted by SASES, **Bonitas Medical Scheme** (administered by Medscheme who participated in the pilot study) have agreed to allow all appendectomies to be done laparoscopically without any letters of motivation being required. There are some conditions that apply to this:

1. The surgeon is expected to keep within the R3950 basket fee for disposables.
2. The lowest Bonitas schemes - Primary, BonSave, BonFit and Bon Essential - will accrue a R2750 once off co-payment.

This illustrates the value of societies engaging with funders in pilot projects. We hope that other schemes (particularly those in the Medscheme stable) will follow suit.

### SURGICOM AT ASSA / SAGES 2017

The ASSA / SAGES 2017 congress will be held at the Boardwalk Conference Centre, Port Elizabeth between 5th and 8th August. Surgicom will conduct a 2-hour private practice plenary session on the Tuesday morning 8th August. In addition there will be a 2 hour parallel private practice session on Monday 7 August at 13h30. Focus areas will be efficient coding, group practice, multi-disciplinary co-ordinated care, waste, abuse and fraud. There will be an in depth review of the first year of the pilot project and an opportunity for Surgicom members to raise any questions or difficulties related to private practice. As the following day is a public holiday, we encourage all surgeons to plan to attend this important session. The Surgicom AGM will be held at 16h00 on Sunday 6th August.

**Save these dates now and plan to be there!**

ASSA\_SAGES\_2017.JPG



### JONATHAN SCHAFER MD

Thanks to very generous financial support from Discovery Health, Surgicom has been able to invite Jonathan Schaffer to the ASSA/SAGES Congress as a key-note speaker. Jonathan is an orthopaedic surgeon and a director of the Cleveland Clinic. He is an expert in making technology work for medical practice. In addition to presentations during both Surgicom sessions he will also be talking on the power of the electronic medical record during the VASSA sessions.

### HOW SURGEONS CAN BENEFIT FINANCIALLY BY EFFICIENT CODING

This rather provocative challenge is the title of a presentation to be given by Suresh Raidoo at the ASSA/SAGES congress on Monday afternoon 7 August. Suresh is a Surgicom Board member, a practising general surgeon and senior medical advisor for Momentum, Metropolitan and several smaller medical schemes. Suresh believes that as general surgeons we are at "the bottom of the pile"! His insights into efficient coding will be very welcome. Don't miss this.

### PRACTICE COST STUDIES IN 2017

Surgeons in private practice are once again being asked to justify the fees that they charge. This is implied in the Health Market Inquiry deliberations and the discussions ahead of the possible introduction of National Health Insurance. We face renewed calls for price regulation in private practice and the imposition of pre-determined tariffs. In order to answer these challenges it will be necessary to conduct proper cost-studies as the high costs of running surgical practices are the basis for the fees that we charge. The previously conducted studies are considered to be out of date. SAMA has now initiated a process aimed at getting this job done and called for participants which (hopefully) will include Healthman to better enable Surgicom's participation.

### THE DISCOVERY PILOT PROJECT IS STRONG

135 Surgicom members are currently participating in the Discovery Pilot. During the first 6 months, DHMS paid out an additional R2.1 m to participating surgeons at an average of R20 000/practice. 5500 discharge summaries were completed. Participation continues to grow in a linear pattern. We encourage all surgeons to participate because we believe that participating in quality assessments and data sharing will benefit surgeons as well as funders. Obtaining patient consent through Health ID has been streamlined and most surgeons have found the discharge summaries to be fairly quick and painless.

### UPDATE YOUR PROFILE ON THE SURGICOM WEBSITE

The website has been enhanced by Andre Reddy with a generous sponsorship from MSD. Please visit [www.surgicom.co.za](http://www.surgicom.co.za) to update your membership details.

**Philip Matley**  
Chairman: Surgicom

#### Surgicom Board:

*Dr Philip Matley (Chairman), Dr Dean Lutrin, Prof Sats Pillay, Dr Suresh Raidoo, Dr José Ramos, Dr André Reddy, Dr John Strachan, Dr Mike Wellsted, Dr Bheki Dube, Dr Thelani Lowan, Dr Stephen Grobler (Consultant), Dr Mike Klipin (ASSA Representative)*