

# A SEASON OF STRUCTURE:

## ADVOCACY, ACCESS & AFRICAN SOLIDARITY



### Q2 Closed, Foundations Set: Progress with Purpose

Though we're a month past Quarter 2, the groundwork laid between April and June continues to shape our path forward.

This quarter saw the SASSLink App piloted in Gauteng and prepared for rollout in the Eastern Cape. We advanced key policy work, deepened alliances through the Cancer Alliance, and helped drive the formation of the African Ostomy Association.

And in a milestone moment for patient advocacy—our own Faizel Jacobs has been nominated and appointed to represent 'The Patients' Voice' on the Ministerial Advisory Committee (MACC) on the Prevention and Control of Cancer.

We'll share more on these significant developments inside the newsletter. Q2 may be behind us, but its momentum lives on—reminding us that lasting change is built step by step, in community, and always Stronger Together.



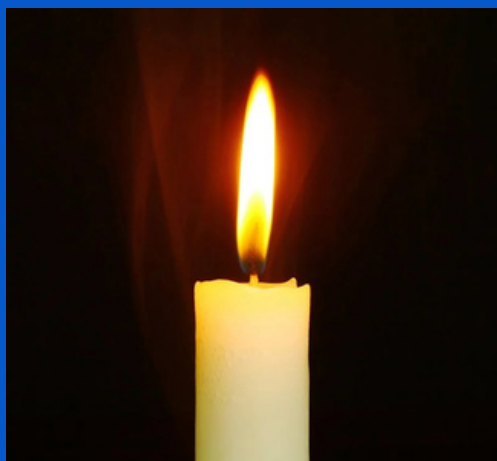
### In Loving Memory and Deepest Sympathy

As we reflect on the progress of the past quarter, we also pause to acknowledge the deep personal loss experienced by one of our own.

Our beloved Sr Jolanda van Noordwyk—affectionately known as Sr Mzi—tragically lost her son, Cornell, after illness.

To Jolanda and her son Danny, we extend our heartfelt condolences. Words may fall short, but please know your SASS family holds you close in this time of sorrow. May Cornell's memory be a blessing, and may you find comfort in the love that surrounds you.

**Stronger Together. Always.**



## PROJECT ECHO: EXPANDING REACH, EMPOWERING NURSES & OSTOMATES ALIKE

In Q2, SASS joined Project ECHO training—an innovative, virtual learning model that connects local nurses with experts from around the world to share knowledge and skills.

Thanks to our partnership with the Cancer Alliance, this program helps us tackle the shortage of qualified stoma nurses by scaling accessible training and mentorship across South Africa—especially in rural areas.

We're excited to announce that our first round of training and learning sessions will kick off by the end of Q3, bringing this vital support directly to nurses on the ground and patients alike.

Additionally, further team training is planned for September 2025, with Shahieda Dramat and Heather White participating to strengthen our in-house expertise.

**Together, we close the gap**—one nurse at a time.



### ADVOCATING WHERE IT MATTERS: SASS AT THE GAUTENG THEATRE SISTERS MEETING

In March 2025, SASS proudly participated in the Gauteng Theatre Sisters meeting, where we raised awareness about the importance of stoma site marking—especially in emergency surgical settings.

Following the Delmas training session, Heather was invited to represent SASS at the event, where she hosted an info table and passionately advocated for improved practices and support for ostomates.

Her presence made a powerful impact—so much so that SASS has officially been added to the program for the next meeting, expected to draw another 300+ delegates!

We're also excited to share that later in August, SASS has been invited to participate in the APPSA Gauteng Chapter Study Day—another important step in expanding our reach and strengthening professional awareness.

These opportunities remind us that real change happens when we show up together—consistently, collaboratively, and with purpose. Each engagement is a step forward in building a more informed and compassionate surgical community.

Watch out for our next newsletter for a full update!

## **RESTORING DIGNITY THROUGH PARTNERSHIP & EDUCATION**

### **SASS and Helen Joseph Hospital Lead the Way in Stoma Care**

In April and May 2025, the South African Society of Stomates (SASS) partnered with Helen Joseph Hospital (HJH) in Johannesburg for a multi-day capacity-building initiative aimed at improving stoma care services in the public health system. What started as a workshop quickly became a shared mission: to restore dignity to ostomates and equip nurses to deliver consistent, compassionate care.

This initiative was made possible through a powerful combination of clinical expertise, grassroots collaboration – and global support from our international partner, Footprints 2 Africa (F2A).

### **Strengthening the System, One Nurse at a Time**

Helen Joseph Hospital is the only tertiary hospital serving Region B of Gauteng. With no district or regional hospital to act as a buffer, the stoma clinic finds itself stretched beyond capacity. Despite serving hundreds of patients – some from as far as Soweto – only one nurse had completed stomaltherapy training prior to this program.



Sr Aletta Ross & A Patient in a Warm Embrace

“Our nurses are trained, but not specialized,” explains Lethabo Mashile, Communications Manager at HJH. “Many of our patients don’t even know what type of stoma they have, let alone how to care for it. This collaboration gave our staff exposure to different cases, complications, and products – tools that will have a lasting impact.”

With Sr Jolanda Janse van Noordwyk, a SASS-affiliated stoma nurse, leading the training, the program included both theory and practice. Nurses were introduced to key concepts, scripting protocols, and peristomal skin management – and then guided through real-life patient care in the clinic.

For Sr Aletta Ross, Operational Manager, it was a turning point:

“We’ve been doing our best with limited knowledge and no specialized support. This program gave us hope. It reminded us that we are not alone.”

With the correctly prescribed pouch, we significantly reduced leakages, peristomal skin complications, and the number of pouches used per month which in turn showed a marked improvement in patient compliance and overall quality of life.

## **DIGNITY IN A BOX: THE ROLE OF FOOTPRINTS 2 AFRICA**



This partnership was not only about training — it was about resources.

Enter Footprints 2 Africa (F2A): a UK-registered, faith-based charity dedicated to bringing dignity, hope and compassion to ostomates across Africa. Their mission is simple yet profound — to distribute donated stoma supplies and empower the most vulnerable to live with confidence and care.

Thanks to F2A's generosity, SASS was able to provide each patient seen during the program with 30 days' worth of stoma supplies. This support has now been extended and the 60 patients that formed part of this trial are set to receive F2A Donated stoma supplies until at least September 2025!

This support helped alleviate the ongoing stock shortages at Helen Joseph, where nurses have previously been forced to ration bags — sometimes providing as few as three pouches per patient per month. In May 2025, Sam from Footprints 2 Africa joined the SASS team on-site at HJH and witnessed first-hand the significant improvements reported — from better pouching outcomes to a visible boost in patient morale and nurse confidence.

"F2A made it possible for us to say YES to our patients," said Sr Aletta. "For once, we didn't have to turn anyone away."

## **FROM THE CLINIC TO THE AIRWAVES: RAISING AWARENESS ON KOFIFI FM**

As momentum grew, the partnership was invited to take the conversation further — this time, on air.

SASS and Helen Joseph Hospital joined a live radio discussion on Kofifi FM, using the opportunity to amplify awareness about ostomy care and share insights from the program.

The segment highlighted:

- Strengthening clinical capacity
- Improving access to appropriate stoma care
- Ensuring that every ostomate feels seen, supported, and able to thrive

It was a celebration of what's possible when healthcare professionals, community advocates, and global allies unite around a common purpose: dignified, equitable healthcare for all.



## AFRICAN OSTOMY ASSOCIATION: OFFICIALLY REGISTERED AND BUILDING MOMENTUM

The African Ostomy Association (AOA) is officially registered, marking a significant milestone in uniting and supporting ostomates across the continent.

Internally, the AOA is actively developing strategies to grow its community beyond the current 14 member countries, aiming to broaden its reach and impact.

The AOA is proud to announce that Faizel Jacobs has been elected as President, serving alongside an esteemed leadership team including:

- Mary Thuo (Kenya)
- Lilian Njogu (Kenya)
- Linda Moyo (Zimbabwe)
- Jón Þorkelsson, President of the European Ostomy Association

**Together**, this diverse and dedicated team is committed to strengthening ostomy care, advocacy, and education throughout Africa.



## WORKING TOGETHER FOR CHANGE

SASS continues to work alongside the Cancer Alliance to advance equitable cancer care—ensuring ostomy support is recognised as a critical part of the cancer journey, especially in collaboration with the Eastern Cape Department of Health.

With many stomas in South Africa resulting from late-stage colorectal cancer, it's vital that ostomy care is integrated into screening, treatment, and survivorship planning.

In direct engagement with Dr Rolene Wagner, Head of Health in the Eastern Cape, we're developing educational initiatives for the remainder of the year. As part of the Cancer Alliance Cohort—including The Purple Project, Project Flamingo, Reach for Recovery, CHOC, CANSA, the Global Colon Cancer Association, and SASS—we're also working with the Department to establish a dedicated working committee focused on long-term strategies to expand equitable access to cancer-related care.

Together, we are:

- Strengthening colorectal cancer pathways by embedding ostomy and psychosocial support
- Preparing to roll out the SASSLink App for patients and nurses
- Expanding nurse training through Project ECHO, especially in rural areas
- Advocating for ostomy inclusion in essential care packages
- Elevating patient voices in policy conversations

This is no small task—but these first steps mark meaningful progress toward a future where no ostomate is left behind.



SAVE THE DATE: SASS CONFERENCE 2026



27–28 March 2026

Century City Convention Centre, Cape Town

Join us for the SASS Conference 2026 – Building Bridges for Invisible Needs, where we’ll be championing access, dignity, and connection for every South African ostomate.

Hosted by the South African Society of Stomates (SASS) and supported by global allies from across Africa, Europe, and the USA, this 1½-day event brings together:

- Colorectal & General Surgeons
- Stoma & Wound Care Nurses
- Physiotherapists & Biokineticists
- Dietitians & Allied Health Professionals
- Patient Advocates & Policy Leaders



Select sessions will be CPD-accredited for qualifying professionals.

Expect lived experience panels, multidisciplinary dialogue, accredited learning, and bold solutions—all under one roof.

Save the date and stand with us as we build a future where no ostomate is left behind.

Thank You for Powering Progress

As we reflect on a quarter of meaningful strides—from the SASSLink pilot to key provincial engagements—we extend sincere thanks to our sponsors: Coloplast, OMS Medical, and Hollister.

Your support has been pivotal in helping us amplify our advocacy, train more nurses, and begin embedding ostomy care into the public health agenda.

This partnership continues to prove the impact of private sector collaboration in driving systemic change. We look forward to deepening this work alongside the State—because Stronger Together is more than a slogan; it’s our shared commitment.

