

SAPA NEWS

This year has gotten off to a fantastic start, with a myriad of webinars, awareness days and masterclasses ensuring that there was something for all members of the paediatric community. SAPA began the year with two excellent webinars by esteemed speakers. CHD Awareness Week saw us donning red t-shirts in support of broken little hearts. The South African Paediatric Association (SAPA) also crossed international waters and teamed up with our colleagues from IPALA, Australia, to host the first-ever SAPA-IPALA Leadership Masterclass Workshop, and this is just the start!

SAPA WEBINAR SERIES LAUNCH

SAPA successfully launched its 2026 national webinar series, with the inaugural session addressing long-term healthcare in children. The session featured valuable insights from Prof. T Westwood, Dr S Naidoo and Dr Z Mukuddem-Sablay. Discussions focused on holistic, multidisciplinary care as well as strengthening transitional services from paediatric to adult healthcare systems.

Next, Prof. Charl Verwey presented an update on the Global Initiative for Asthma (GINA) guidelines, contextualised within the South African setting. The talk outlined evolving asthma management strategies using the latest data, a key topic for all paediatricians.



CONGENITAL HEART DISEASE AWARENESS WEEK (7-14 FEBRUARY 2026)

Congenital Heart Disease (CHD) Awareness Week highlighted the ongoing need for early detection, equitable access to paediatric cardiology services, and improved surgical capacity in South Africa.

Across all levels of care – clinics to quaternary centers - clinicians and advocacy groups highlighted education and the importance of timely referral pathways. The week also served to honour families and

children living with congenital cardiac conditions, celebrating their bravery and tenacity as they take on each day and the challenges it may bring.



Photos: left to right: Maphulaneng Hospital, Charlotte Maxeke Academic Hospital, and Dora Nginza Hospital donning red t-shirts in support of CHD Awareness week

SAPA-IPALA MASTERCLASS (16-17 FEBRUARY 2026)

The SAPA-IPALA Masterclass was the first of its kind, drawing on the expertise from IPALA, the International Paediatric Academic Leaders Association. It brought together paediatricians and leaders from Australia, United Kingdom and South Africa, all under one roof for two days of high-level academic engagement and leadership development.

This collaborative initiative reinforced the importance of clinical excellence, integrative thinking and advocacy in paediatric practice. Sessions encouraged reflective practice, interdisciplinary collaboration, and the empowerment of paediatric leadership capacity within both the public and private healthcare sectors. It was a fantastic day comprising lectures and team activities that provided networking opportunities and stimulating discussions among leaders in the field.



CHOC FLIP-FLOP DAY – 20 FEBRUARY 2026

On 20 February 2026, communities, doctors, patients and parents across South Africa participated in Flip-Flop Day in support of the Childhood Cancer Foundation South Africa (CHOC).

The campaign raised awareness and funds for children and adolescents affected by cancer, highlighting the psychosocial, financial, and medical burdens faced by affected families. Healthcare professionals, schools, and corporate partners demonstrated solidarity by donning their 'plakkies' in a unified effort in the fight against cancer.



The National Institute for Communicable Diseases supporting Flip Flop day

WORLD KIDNEY DAY – 12 MARCH 2026

World Kidney Day saw the paediatric community swapping their red T-shirts for green ones as the focus turned to those living with renal diseases.

Paediatric nephrologists used the occasion to highlight the urgent need for early detection of congenital and acquired kidney disorders. They also emphasised the need for improved access to dialysis and transplantation services, and raised awareness of preventable risk factors.

The day served as a reminder that early-life kidney health has lifelong implications and we have to advocate for early detection and treatment as paediatric specialists.



Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital in support of World Kidney Day

LOOKING AHEAD

The early months of 2026 have reflected vibrancy, academic rigour and advocacy in the paediatric community. As we look to the next few months ahead, we wish all our colleagues strength as the RSV wave begins to build, a blessed Easter for those celebrating and a word of encouragement to continue the momentum that we have brought to the first few months of 2026. There is no doubt that this will allow for a fruitful year for the paediatric community and the little ones we serve.

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