

MEDI BRIEF

DECEMBER 2020

Chairman's year-end message

As the turbulent year of 2020 comes to a close, I have no doubt we will all look back with bruised sentiment at the year that brought the global scourge of the Covid-19 pandemic, which the world continues to fight even as we move into 2021.

It's been a year of health and financial scares as well as social and political upheavals that will characterise a changed path for the years to come. Our daily lives have changed with us having to be so much more vigilant about our health, as well as the wellbeing of those we love and come into contact with. Where and how we work may never be the same again yet so many adapted so successfully to remote working which enabled more personal flexibility. In a similar manner, where and how our children will continue with their learning into the future has changed. Even something as simple as shopping may never be the same again. I consider all of these changes in both awe and wonder, especially considering how well the environment responded so positively and rapidly to the changes in human and business behaviour. All this and more, it's certainly been a year where we have learnt to value what we have rather than focusing on what we don't have.

Covid-19 laid bare some failures of our costly, inefficient, market-based healthcare system. It highlighted the fragility of the pharmaceutical supply chains and identified public sensitivity over patent abuses. 2020 showed that excellent healthcare is a scarce resource to be used responsibly with consideration for others. The Public and Private healthcare sectors engaged collaboratively and demonstrated the true spirit of ubuntu, which we hope will bode well for future NHI developments and that this will enable pragmatic solutions to be found.

An experience of this nature requires businesses to adapt to new realities and to change course toward better functionality and cost-effectiveness. The Anglo Medical Scheme rose to meet the needs of our members. We absorbed the extraordinary shocks that the coronavirus pandemic brought, operational, financial and regulatory. Benefits were broadened to provide cover for additional services not conceived 9 months ago, telemedicine fast-tracked to reduce the need for physical contact, investments were diversified to reduce risk. The AMS Head Office team as



well as our administrators and providers redeveloped and broadened operations and communication channels to adapt to the new social requirements without compromising service to our members.

I am proud to say that all these new challenges were met and responded to with enthusiasm, warmth, and compassion. Some members were at their most vulnerable during this period and, as we move into the holiday season, I have no doubt that AMS will continue to provide a professional and caring ear in dealing with your queries.

In looking to 2021, we expect Covid-19 will continue to disrupt. The Trustees will continue to recognise the difficulties our employers and members will face and remain agile to new innovations, including potential vaccines, while working within tight budgets.

My and the Board of Trustees' heartfelt thanks to all who made a difference in the unprecedented circumstances that befell us all in 2020, with special mention of the AMS Head Office team, our administrator and service providers. We have been heartened by your feedback and the support shown by our employers and administration staff.

My best wishes to you all for the holiday season. Stay safe, renew your energy, both physical and mental, by spending quality time with your loved ones and finding time to indulge in what you most enjoy. May the New Year bring you health, happiness, and peace.

With very best wishes

Colleen Elliott
Chairman

Working in the new normal

How many of us working AMS members were faced with moving our offices into our homes with little more than a few days' notice in March? How many of us had to rapidly convert kitchen counters, children's bedrooms, spare rooms, garages or even cupboards into our "new" office over a weekend? How many of us added to their job descriptions "IT fundi", "virtual events manager" or "telephony consultant"? And all this on top of filling the gap for our child minders, teachers and caregivers. How many of us feared illness and hospitalisation, retrenchment or reduced salaries, to mention but a few challenges? How many of us felt insecure in this most uncertain world we have found ourselves in, with no answers in sight? Even with enormous support from our employers, how many of us suffered stress and exhaustion from longer working hours, loneliness, isolation and, at times, desperation? The answer should come as no surprise: every working individual, every retiree and, in fact, every member of AMS will have experienced some or all the above. Is it any wonder why you may feel burnt-out, tired, listless or depressed? So, how can we help ourselves and co-workers cope better in the new year?

Take back control of your time – Agree on core working hours

Routine brings certainty, and certainty brings calm. Sticking to a 9-to-5 schedule might simply not work but establishing a reasonable yet flexible timetable with your manager, and committing to it, will go a long way to restoring direction and composure. Keep after-hours emails to send during acceptable work times; don't put pressure on recipients to respond at 9pm or over weekends. Be mindful and patient with colleagues who may be working different "shifts" so everybody has realistic expectations. Remember: we are all in this together.

Ensure your work area is set up properly

Don't ruin your back while slouching on the couch. Pain is stress, stress is depressing, and both are unproductive. If you don't have an ergonomic setup, speak to your manager. Define your workspace and only use it during working hours. If possible, set physical boundaries to be in/out of your 'office'.

Restore balance – Switch your work mode on and off

Your home is your castle, keep it a fun, happy and safe haven; work is your ambition, full of energy and drive, keep the two separate and restore the balance. We used to commute to and from work which gave us some quiet time to boot up and wind down before and after work. Your computer needs to shut down and reboot to perform optimally and so do you. If you can, try transition to and from work. This may mean getting dressed for work and changed afterwards; taking a brief walk around your complex or the block every morning and evening; doing some stretches twice a day; or listening to music over a cup of coffee. It doesn't matter what the activity, just find the space on your timetable to breathe in work and breathe

out work. Don't leave your computer on at night; rather switch it on and off to 'mark' the beginning and end of each working day. Disconnect your computer from the WiFi, avoid checking emails on your cellphone – the idea is not to stay 'switched on' 24/7.

Maintain your relationships – Connect with co-workers and friends

Social distancing, while necessary, has long-term negative consequences if not managed. Choose to spend time to share, laugh and be human with your colleagues and friends. Find out how they are "keeping-up" or "combatting" the common Covid enemy as well as adapting to the new norm. Learn, support and find the social fun in your new virtual reality. Reconnect with your colleagues, show your face, let them into your home virtually, meet their pets and let them be part of your life. It is quite disorientating and 'unreal' to talk to an empty computer screen all day. It is much more rewarding, even entertaining, to talk to a person with real expressions and reactions.

Burnout is not a work achievement. It is not a badge of honour

Don't neglect your most precious asset – your mental and physical health. If you work yourself to the bone you won't be productive anymore. Burnout is not just feeling exhausted, it can cause lasting damage to your health, and lead to things like high blood pressure, heart disease, anxiety, depression, cognitive decline, Alzheimer's disease, a weakened immune system, obesity and, in extreme cases, even death.

Watch out for warning signs and seek support if you experience some of these symptoms.

Possible symptoms of burnout

- Difficulties concentrating, diminished motivation, forgetfulness, lack of productivity
- Headaches, stomach aches, dizziness, fainting, heart palpitations, shortness of breath
- Feeling exhausted, lacking energy, feeling drained
- Negative thoughts, frustration and lack of interest, anger, depression, anxiety
- Overuse of recreational drugs and trouble falling asleep or staying asleep

We need to take time over the festive season to acknowledge what we went through, what impact it has had on us and how we can reboot our systems for a healthy 2021. Our new year's resolutions for 2021 might look very different to the previous year's. These might include reconnecting with nature, checking in on family or taking more time for ourselves. While the external circumstances won't change when the date ticks over to 2021 – maybe we can tackle this new year with more mindfulness.

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Member Queries:

Value Care Plan: 0861 665 665, anglo@primecure.co.za

Standard and Managed Care Plan: 0860 222 633, member@angloms.co.za

Claims: claims@angloms.co.za