

# MEDI BRIEF

DECEMBER 2022

## Principal Officers' year-end message

As we approach the end of 2022, I would like to take this opportunity to applaud you, our loyal members. The participation and feedback received from the pensioner and employee sessions has been nothing short of amazing. Our members are engaged and positive about the Scheme and the service we deliver. The appreciation expressed has meant a lot to me, the head office staff as well as our three Client Liaison Officers with whom you engage.

It is also a privilege at this time of the year to be able to honour and thank those who deliver this service, our dedicated teams at Discovery Health, Primecure and MediKredit. Without them, this would not be possible. Your commitment to our service excellence has not gone unnoticed.

A special note needs to go to our dedicated call-centre staff once again. During, and after, the flooding that struck KwaZulu-Natal in April this year, described as South Africa's 'deadliest storm on record', the effort made to ensure services were not interrupted was commendable. Your contribution makes all the difference.

While 2022 was definitely a turning point in the fight against Covid-19, I am acutely aware that many of you, during the past few years have probably spent more time alone than ever and faced more trauma or stress compared to pre-pandemic years. Here at the Scheme, we are conscious of the challenges this period has brought to many. Readjustment and reintegration into a more 'normal' world are both exciting and, at times, difficult. In 2023 we will be monitoring mental health and long Covid and, through adequate benefit adjustments, we hope to be able to assist those in need on their road to recovery.

These past years were not all bad. Great strides were made in technology, resulting in fundamental shifts in communication and



healthcare delivery to mention a few. Discovery Health has taken full advantage of this period and is well advanced in embracing many new developments. Virtual and artificial intelligence tools are being implemented in ways to help people access their benefits, remain informed and stay healthy. While I can't tell you what next year or beyond will look like, a key to success will be to correctly determine the 'new normal', thereafter, to adapt to the known and unknown disruptions. Severe power shortages, future weather and disease outbreaks, global catastrophes and legislative changes are likely to be part of this new normal. What I can tell you is that in 2023, together with our consultants and administrators, I am confident AMS will deliver the same excellent service, uncomplicated benefits that are good value for money, and the comfort that your Scheme will remain strong while adapting to the changes we may face.

I wish you well for the holiday season in the knowledge that your strength and tolerance through turbulent times is something to be proud of. May you have a restful, happy time with family and friends.

Until next year

*Fiona Robertson*

## Have a safe holiday!

Netcare 911 has once again compiled a holiday safety guide for us. The latest guide, which we have uploaded to the homepage of our website, includes great information on how to stay safe during the holidays. The guide touches on tips for a safe road trip and driving, explains what happens in our body when we consume alcohol and what effect it has on our driving abilities, reminds us about how to perform CPR, educates us about warning signs for heart attack and stroke, provides tips for water safety, tips for how you can prevent sun and heat damage, and much more! Take a minute to read through this guide – we bet there is something in there that you did not know before.

# I just need to make it to the holidays!

We made it through a pandemic (hopefully!), we left winter behind us, we can travel, see our friends and families again, go to events and yet, for many, it still doesn't feel like we have our pre-pandemic life back. Relationships might have changed, financial pressures increased; the workload seems higher and pace faster than ever. Life throws a war in Europe at us, energy prices and the cost of living are escalating, loadshedding won't end... It just won't stop!

We so often hear "I just need to make it to the holidays", or "I can't wait for the year to be over" – but what magic do we expect from a holiday or calendar change? Sure, time off provides short-term relief in terms of work or family life, but depending on how life affected you up to this point, it might not be enough to fully reset and recharge.

Repeated stress can trigger inflammation in the body, which can lead to a whole variety of health problems like heart disease, diabetes and depression. Chronic stress can interfere with the hormones in our brain and can cause it to chemically change. We can't expect that damage to our health or mental health, built up over weeks, months or years, can be fixed in a two-week holiday.

## **Pull the stress-handbrake for the holidays and reset your thinking for the new year**

### **Align expectations**

Start by aligning your expectation of your holiday and think about long-term and gentle change. We don't always have to aim for 'higher, faster, more'. Maybe this is what brought the stress on us in the first place. Perhaps it's time to set a new course to purposefully aim for 'lower, slower, less'. For the upcoming season, this could be to agree with your family and friends on a budget for gifts, or no gifts at all, or to simplify this year's festive feast – it will probably take stress off everybody's plate.

### **Presence vs presents**

Try to be more present in the moment while you enjoy some free time, either by just focusing on yourself or when sharing your time with friends or family. Gift your time to people that are really important to you, but on top of the wish list must be time for yourself! You cannot pour out of an empty cup!

### **Avoid the drama**

Holidays seem to be a perfect time for things to escalate in relationships or families. Again, it's the expectation of everything needing to be perfect. Remember that Hollywood's Christmas movies of cheerful couples or happy families are just that – Hollywood. The reality is that many of us run out of energy and money at that time of the year. These pressures, plus a couple of holiday indulgences or trying to do too much, can create the

perfect recipe for drama. Whatever comes up – breathe, and let it go; when you're tired, it is not the right time to deal with drama.

### **Take a tech holiday**

Take a holiday from social media and tech. High social media use is linked to increased anxiety and depression. Too much screen time can lead to the same, as well as to sleep problems, chronic neck and back problems, and other long-term consequences. Lock your phone or laptop away and break the routine of constantly checking it.



### **Think about your mental health during the holidays**

Listen to mental health podcasts, read books on the topic, go for walks or meditate. Check in with yourself and think about whether you are striving, coping or just surviving? Identify your stress triggers and consider how can you manage them now and in the new year.

### **Where to get help**

You don't have to figure it all out by yourself. South Africa has fantastic, free support systems in place. Here are two examples where you could start:

**SADAG**, South Africa's biggest mental health organisation, provides free telephone counselling, support and nationwide referrals. Call the helpline on **0800 567 567** or visit their website [www.sadag.org](http://www.sadag.org).

**Lifeline** offers 24-hour counselling service in Johannesburg on **0861 322 322** or [www.lifelinejhb.org.za](http://www.lifelinejhb.org.za). The Western Cape contacts are 021 461 1113 or [www.lifelinewc.org.za](http://www.lifelinewc.org.za).

The Scheme has recognised the increased need for mental health assistance for our members. Together with our administrator, we are working on a new Mental Health Care Programme where we will focus on high-risk cases. These will receive further management tools and benefits through a team of dedicated and specialised care coordinators.

**Do you have further questions on the articles in this edition? Contact us on the numbers and addresses listed here:**

**Visit [www.angloms.co.za](http://www.angloms.co.za) to learn more about your Scheme and benefits.**

Find all previous MediBrief editions in the Info Centre > Knowledge Library.

### **Member Queries:**

**Value Care Plan:** 0861 665 665, [anglo@primecure.co.za](mailto:anglo@primecure.co.za)

**Standard and Managed Care Plan:** 0860 222 633, [member@angloms.co.za](mailto:member@angloms.co.za)

**Claims:** [claims@angloms.co.za](mailto:claims@angloms.co.za)