



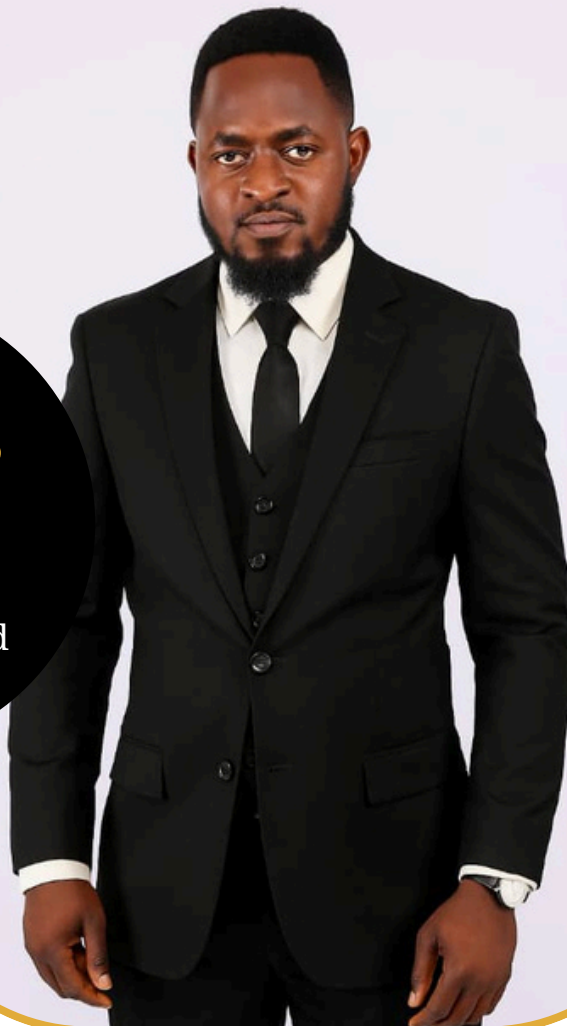
THE PHARMA DIGEST

JAN, 2026

ISSUE 01

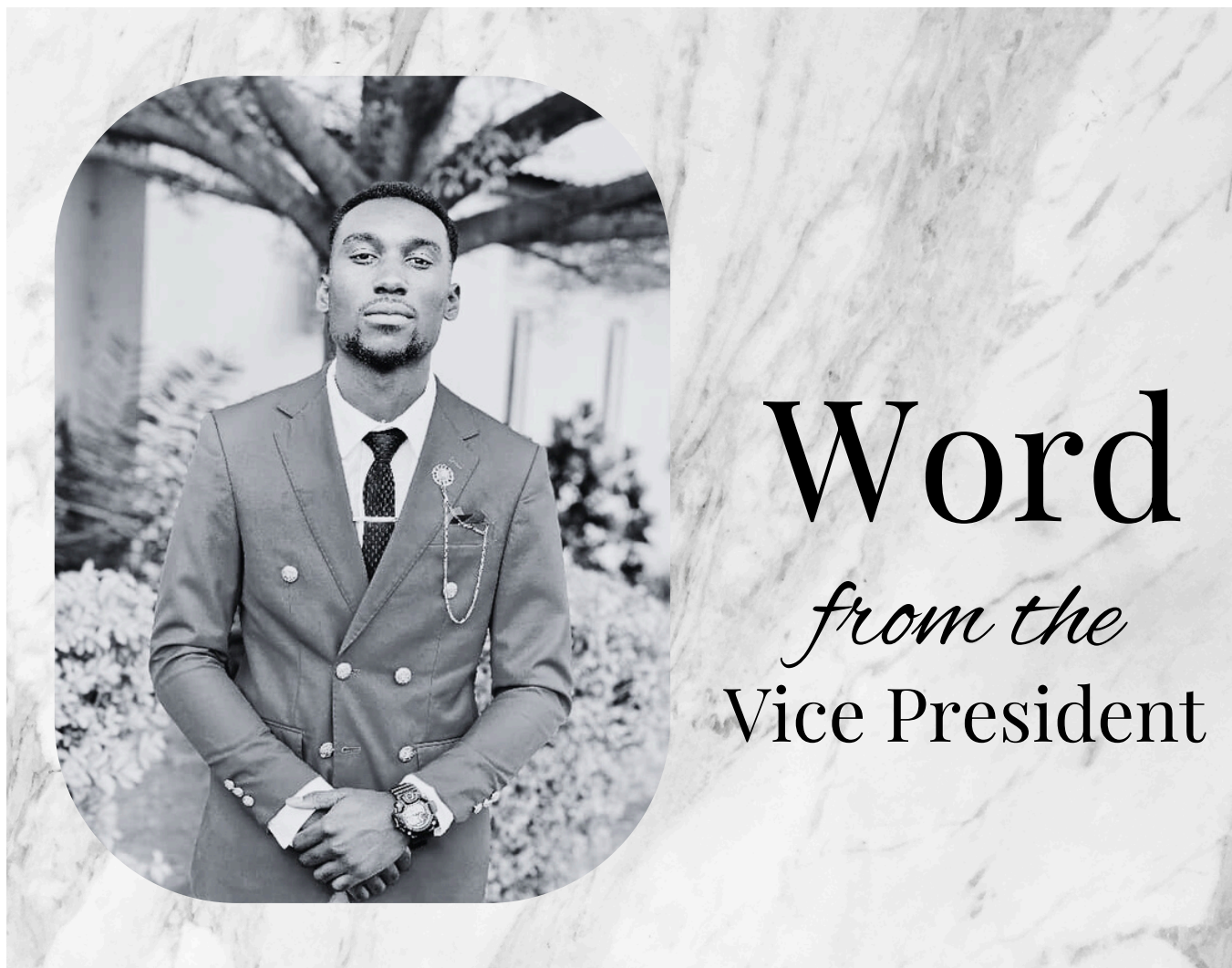
**What is
coming?**

From BPharm to
PharmD - the
journey explained



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Word

from the

Vice President

It is with great pride that I reflect on the role of the Pharmaceutical Students' Association of Zambia (PSAZ) as the unified voice of pharmacy students across the nation. PSAZ brings together aspiring pharmacists from universities and colleges throughout Zambia, creating a platform where students are represented, supported, and prepared for the responsibilities of professional practice.

At its core, PSAZ exists to advocate for the academic and professional interests of pharmacy students. Through leadership development, networking opportunities, and meaningful student engagement, the Association nurtures growth beyond the lecture room. Our collaboration among student chapters strengthens unity, while engagement with professional bodies and industry partners ensures students remain connected to the realities of the pharmaceutical profession.

As Vice President, I am continually inspired by the passion, resilience, and ambition of our members. PSAZ remains committed to developing ethical, competent, and forward-thinking future pharmacists who will contribute meaningfully to pharmaceutical care and public health in Zambia. Together, we stand United for Excellence, shaping the future of pharmacy through professionalism, service, and purpose.

Munsaka Benjamin
PSAZ VICE PRESIDENT



Welcome to the inaugural issue of The Pharma Digest, a historic milestone for the Pharmaceutical Students' Association of Zambia (PSAZ).

This first edition marks the beginning of a platform dedicated to informing, inspiring, and uniting pharmacy students and young professionals as we navigate the evolving landscape of pharmacy in Zambia and beyond.

The theme of this issue, "What is coming? From BPharm to PharmD – the journey explained," reflects a defining moment for the profession.

Pharmacy practice is changing rapidly, with a growing emphasis on patient-centred care, clinical competence, and professional leadership. Through this edition, we seek to clarify these transitions, spark informed dialogue, and prepare students for the opportunities and responsibilities that lie ahead.

Inside this issue, readers will find thoughtful discussions on the future of pharmacy in Zambia, practical insights into career pathways, and reflections on the realities of pharmacy training and practice.

We also take a moment to honour and remember Pharm. Victor Phiri, whose contribution to the profession continues to inspire students across the country.

The Pharma Digest is more than a magazine; it is the voice of pharmacy students, a space for ideas, innovation, and professional growth.

As PSAZ, we remain committed to nurturing excellence, advocacy, and unity within the pharmacy student community. We encourage you to read, reflect, and engage with this publication, and to see yourself not just as a student of pharmacy, but as a future leader of the profession.

Together, we shape the future of pharmacy.

Joseph Mbwili

PSAZ EDITOR GENERAL

Journal of
Pharmacy
Education

From BPharm to PharmD:

The Journey and Future of Pharmacy in Zambia Explained

By Mercy Mulenshi

Why Are We Even Talking About This?

If you are a pharmacy student today, you have probably heard the question: “Is BPharm enough, or is PharmD the future or even necessary?”

All across the world, and increasingly in Zambia now, pharmacy practice is shifting. Pharmacists are no longer seen only as dispensers of medicines, but as clinical medication experts directly involved in patient care. This shift is the main reason many countries have moved from BPharm to PharmD as the entry-level qualification for pharmacists.

BPharm or PharmD: What’s the Real Difference?

Bachelor of Pharmacy (BPharm), focuses heavily on Pharmaceutical sciences, that is pharmaceuticals, medicinal chemistry and pharmacology. It also leans a lot towards drug manufacturing and quality control, dispensing and basic pharmacy practice with supply chain, regulation, and industry roles

It builds strong scientific foundations, and in Zambia it has produced pharmacists who work successfully in hospitals, community pharmacies, industry, regulation, and public health. However, clinical exposure is limited, and students often graduate with less confidence in managing complex patient cases independently.

Doctor of Pharmacy (PharmD) on the other hand, is a practice-focused professional doctorate. Its emphasis is on clinical pharmacy and therapeutics, direct patient care, disease state management, medication therapy reviews, interprofessional healthcare teamwork and extensive hospital and clinical rotations



A quick comparison therefore in terms of aspect of focus, training, clinical confidence, global trends and hospital roles: BPharm is drug-centered, academic and lab based while PharmD is patient-centred with heavy clinical exposure that raises the patient-care confidence.

Globally BPharm is phasing out with PharmD becoming the entry requirement for Pharmacy. In terms of hospital roles, BPharm is mainly supportive compared to PharmD that carries clinical decision-making.

Entry Requirements in Countries that have Transitioned

Countries that moved to PharmD adopted two main routes:

A. Direct Entry PharmD

In countries like the USA, Pakistan, Nigeria and India, transition into PharmD includes:

- Entry after high school, with a science background and strong passes in Biology, Chemistry, and Mathematics.
- Longer training duration of 5 - 6 years integrated with clinical rotations.

B. Post-BPharm Transition to PharmD

- Requires a recognized BPharm degree then undertake a bridging programme of 1 - 3 years.
- Training focuses on clinical pharmacy, therapeutics, and rotations.
- PharmD is often mandatory for pharmacists wanting advanced clinical roles.

Many countries however are still running both systems temporarily before fully adopting PharmD.

From Page 3)**Then Why the Need to Upgrade from BPharm to PharmD?****1. Changing Healthcare Needs**

Diseases today are more complex, the world is faced with conditions such as Diabetes, hypertension, cancer, HIV, and polypharmacy with increased medication-related problems. There is greater need for monitoring, dose adjustments, and patient education.

As such, our Healthcare systems now need pharmacists who can:

- Interpret lab results
- Recommend therapy changes
- Prevent medication errors
- and Improve adherence and outcomes

2. Expanding Roles of Pharmacists Globally

Pharmacists are now:

- Part of ward rounds
- Advising medical doctors on drug therapies
- Leading antimicrobial stewardship
- Managing chronic diseases in clinics

By design, PharmD training prepares pharmacists for these roles

3. Global Alignment

Many international regulatory bodies and employers now prefer or require PharmD for clinical roles and recognize PharmD as the standard for advanced pharmacy practice.

This matters for Zambia because of the competitiveness in the workforce, international collaboration and to harmonize with global standards

As Zambia continues to strengthen its healthcare system, the discussion around BPharm to PharmD is not about discrediting BPharm - it's about future readiness. BPharm laid the foundation, PharmD builds the clinical house on it and distinguishes Pharmacists from Pharmacy Technicians.

The PharmD transition is not just a curriculum change - it is a change in identity, responsibility, and impact that recognizes pharmacists as clinicians.

4. Advantages of Moving to PharmD

For the Students

- Stronger clinical skills and confidence
- Better preparedness for hospital practice
- More diverse career pathways
- Greater professional recognition
- and improved patient interaction and impact

For the Healthcare System

- There will be reduced medication errors
- Better treatment outcomes
- Stronger multidisciplinary collaboration
- and improved public trust in pharmacists

For the Profession

- There is expanded scope of practice
- Stronger advocacy position
- Clear differentiation from technicians and technologists

5. Are There Any Challenges? Yes, and We Should Know Them.

- PharmD takes more years than BPharm and therefore delayed entry into the workforce should be expected.
- Longer training also means increased academic workload, higher tuition costs with equally longer periods before earning income and greater demand for funded clinical training sites.
- *PharmD is calling for adequate hospital placement capacity and clear regulatory frameworks for graduates. The risk of poor implementation and transition is that if not well planned, can lead to confusion about the scope of practice, oversupply or undersupply of pharmacists and frustration among students and practitioners.*

IN MEMORIAM OF PHARM VICTOR SALIMU PHIRI

CELEBRATING A COURAGEOUS LIFE OF SERVICE



A Life of Service

The Pharmacy Students' Association of Zambia (PSAZ) joins the nation's health fraternity in remembering and honouring the life and legacy of Pharmacist Victor Salimu Phiri — a distinguished professional, educator, and compassionate servant of humanity.

Pharmacist Phiri served with excellence as a Consultant Pharmacist at the Cancer Diseases Hospital (CDH), where he contributed meaningfully to the care of patients facing complex and demanding health conditions. In an environment that required both clinical precision and deep empathy, he understood that: *“Every prescription carried not only medicine, but hope.”*

A Mentor to Many

Beyond his clinical work, he was a dedicated lecturer and mentor whose influence extended far beyond the classroom. He shaped the minds and values of pharmacy students through his commitment to integrity, patient-centred practice, and lifelong learning. Those who encountered him remember a man of humility, patience, and approachability — always willing to listen, advise, and encourage.

“His influence extended far beyond the classroom.”

A Courageous Journey

For seven years, Pharmacist Victor Salimu Phiri courageously battled Multiple Myeloma with strength, dignity, and resolve. Even amid prolonged treatment and personal challenges, his dedication to pharmacy, teaching, and service never wavered. He eventually succumbed while undergoing chemotherapy in India, marking the end of a long and courageous fight.

“Even amid prolonged treatment, his dedication never wavered.”

An Enduring Legacy

Though his passing leaves a profound void, his legacy endures in the lives he touched and the standards he set. He inspired a generation of pharmacy students to pursue excellence, empathy, and professionalism.

As PSAZ, we extend our deepest condolences to his family, colleagues, friends, and all who mourn his loss. We honour his memory by committing ourselves to the values he embodied — service, compassion, dedication, and excellence in pharmacy practice.

Rest in Peace, Captain.

Navigating A Career in Hospital Pharmacy

A Profile of Pharmacist Divine Mbambala

Pharmacist Divine Mbambala did not always imagine himself in hospital practice. During his undergraduate years, pharmacy initially felt distant and theoretical. That perception changed dramatically between fourth and fifth year, when clinical rotations exposed him to the realities of patient care and clinical responsibility. What had once felt abstract became deeply personal.

“Clinical exposure transformed my perspective on pharmacy. It ignited a passion to become a pharmacist with a difference — one who goes beyond dispensing to actively influence patient outcomes.”

After graduation, he made a deliberate decision to pursue hospital pharmacy, drawn by the opportunity to apply pharmacotherapy knowledge directly at the patient’s bedside. He immersed himself in internal medicine, focusing on rational medicine use, patient safety, and collaborative care. For him, the profession is not driven by financial reward, but by responsibility.

“What truly inspires me is the trust patients place in us during their most vulnerable moments.”



FROM STUDENT TO CLINICIAN

The transition from pharmacy student to hospital practitioner was not without challenges. Moving from supervised academic environments to real-life clinical accountability required a shift in mindset. Decisions were no longer hypothetical; recommendations now carried real consequences.

He describes the adjustment as one that demanded rapid growth in confidence, clinical judgment, and communication — particularly when interacting with senior clinicians. Learning to balance humility with assertiveness became essential, always guided by evidence and patient-centred care.



LIFE ON THE WARD

A typical day in hospital pharmacy begins early, with the review of patient charts, laboratory results, and medication profiles. Ward rounds form the backbone of daily practice, where pharmacists actively contribute to therapeutic decision-making, identify drug-related problems, and recommend evidence-based interventions.

Beyond rounds, the role extends to patient counselling, prescription validation, antimicrobial stewardship, pharmacovigilance activities, and mentoring junior staff and students.

“No two days are the same. That’s what makes hospital pharmacy intellectually stimulating.”

Navigating A Career in Hospital Pharmacy

A Profile of Pharmacist Divine Mbambala

(From Page 6)



Direct patient care is central to his practice. He is deeply involved in assessing medication appropriateness, renal and hepatic dose adjustments, drug interactions, and treatment efficacy. Patient counselling plays a critical role in improving adherence and medication safety.



A DISTINCT ROLE WITHIN PHARMACY

Hospital pharmacy, he explains, differs significantly from community or industrial pharmacy. While community pharmacy often centres on dispensing and primary care, and industrial pharmacy focuses on manufacturing and regulation, hospital pharmacy places pharmacists at the heart of clinical decision-making.

Managing complex cases, collaborating with multidisciplinary teams, and directly influencing therapeutic outcomes define the profession.

“Hospital pharmacy is clinically intensive and patient-centred. It’s where pharmacists function as true medication experts.”



PATIENT SAFETY AND PHARMACOVIGILANCE

Preventing medication errors is a core responsibility of hospital pharmacists. Through prescription screening, medication reconciliation, dose optimization, and continuous monitoring, pharmacists intercept potential errors before they reach patients. Education of both healthcare workers and patients further strengthens safety systems.

Adverse drug reactions (ADRs) are identified through active patient monitoring, chart reviews, laboratory trends, and patient feedback. Once suspected, they are documented and reported according to Zambia Medicines Regulatory Authority (ZAMRA) guidelines, reinforcing a culture of pharmacovigilance within the hospital setting.



CHALLENGES AND THE WAY FORWARD

Pharmacy practice in Zambia faces several challenges, including medicine shortages, high patient volumes, limited numbers of clinical pharmacists, and underreporting of ADRs. Addressing these challenges requires both system-level improvements and individual commitment.

He believes students have a vital role to play by building strong clinical foundations, embracing evidence-based practice, participating in research, and advocating for the expanded role of pharmacists in patient care.



MEDICINES MANAGEMENT AND RATIONAL USE

Pharmacists also play a strategic role in medicines management, including forecasting, procurement planning, inventory control, and managing shortages. Clinical input ensures that therapeutic alternatives during shortages remain safe, effective, and guideline-compliant.

SURVIVING PHARMACY SCHOOL

LESSONS FROM THOSE WHO MADE IT TO THE FINISH LINE

By Lukumo Chishala

Pharmacy school is not for the faint-hearted. From the first lectures of first year to the final clinical rotations of fifth year, the journey is demanding, relentless, and deeply transformative. It is defined by long study hours, complex sciences, clinical responsibility, and constant pressure to perform yet it is also marked by growth, resilience, and purpose.

Final-year pharmacy students reflect on what helped them survive and thrive through pharmacy school, sharing lessons they wish they had embraced earlier and habits they believe every student should cultivate.

Pharmacy school teaches you science, yes, but more importantly, it teaches you endurance.

• YOUR BODY IS YOUR FIRST LABORATORY

Prioritizing Physical Well-being

One of the most underestimated contributors to academic success is physical health. Final-year students agree that many academic struggles are worsened by neglecting basic self-care.

Nutrition

Skipping meals or relying on instant snacks is common during busy academic weeks but students quickly learn the cost. Balanced nutrition fuels memory, concentration, and stamina — all essential for pharmacy training. *“You can’t expect your brain to function on caffeine alone. Once I started eating properly, my concentration improved instantly.”*

Physical Activity and Sleep

Exercise is not a distraction from studying; it is a stress-management tool. *“Even a 30-minute walk cleared my head better than rereading notes when I was exhausted.”* Late nights may feel productive, but chronic sleep deprivation undermines performance. *“I realized too late that sleep was part of studying. Rested minds remember more.”*



• BEYOND THE LECTURE HALL

Social and Professional Engagement - Pharmacy education extends far beyond classrooms and laboratories. Students who actively engaged in professional spaces reported greater confidence and clarity about their career paths.

“Attending professional events reminded me why I chose pharmacy in the first place.”

Participation in seminars, workshops, conferences, student forums and joining professional organizations exposes learners to real-world pharmacy practice and emerging trend, allowing students to build networks early and develop a professional identity.

“Networking doesn’t start after graduation, it starts the moment you introduce yourself as a pharmacy student.”

• MASTERING THE ACADEMIC LOAD

Mindset Meets Strategy - Final-year students describe success as a balance between internal discipline and external organization.

The Intrinsic Factor is the Inner Work: Self-belief, purpose, and discipline sustain students when motivation fades.

“Motivation comes and goes but discipline is what carries you through the semester.”

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SURVIVING PHARMACY SCHOOL

LESSONS FROM THOSE WHO MADE IT TO THE
FINISH LINE

(From Page 8)

The Extrinsic Factors are the Practical Survival Skills: Time management, balancing lectures, labs, exams, research, and clinical work requires deliberate planning.

“Once I treated my planner like a prescription chart, everything changed.”

• COLLABORATIVE LEARNING:

Study groups reduce isolation and deepen understanding, *“explaining a topic to someone else was the best revision I ever did.”* And learn for understanding, while cramming may help you pass exams, conceptual learning builds competent pharmacists.

“Once I stopped studying just to pass and started studying to understand, pharmacy made sense.”

FINAL-YEAR STUDENTS’ SURVIVAL CHECKLIST

- Eat balanced meals regularly
- Incorporate physical activity into your routine
- Protect your sleep
- Attend professional and extracurricular events
- Network early with healthcare professionals
- Join a professional organization
- Cultivate self-belief and confidence
- Master time management
- Study collaboratively
- Learn for understanding, not memorization

Pharmacy school is undeniably challenging — but it is also profoundly rewarding. With intentional self-care, disciplined study habits, professional engagement, and supportive peers, students can move beyond merely surviving the program to truly thriving within it.

The voices of final-year students remind us that while the journey is demanding, it is also one of growth, resilience, and purpose — shaping pharmacists prepared to make a meaningful impact on patient care and public health.

Navigating A Career in Hospital Pharmacy A Profile of Pharmacist Divine Mbambala (From Page 7)

Adherence to National Treatment Guidelines and the Essential Medicines List is fundamental to hospital practice, promoting rational use, cost-effectiveness, and equitable access while allowing for individualized patient care.



WORKING AS PART OF THE HEALTHCARE TEAM

Interprofessional collaboration is central to optimizing patient outcomes. Through ward rounds, case discussions, and shared decision-making, pharmacists contribute pharmacotherapy expertise while respecting the roles of doctors and nurses.

Disagreements regarding therapy choices are approached professionally, guided by evidence, clinical data, and patient-specific factors.

“The focus is always the patient’s best interest, not professional hierarchy.”



ADVICE TO FUTURE HOSPITAL PHARMACISTS

For students aspiring to clinical or hospital pharmacy, his advice is clear: find your purpose early. Passion, curiosity, humility, and patient-centredness are essential qualities in a demanding but rewarding field.

“Hospital pharmacy is fundamentally about people, not just medicines. If you commit to excellence, the profession will shape you into a pharmacist who truly makes a difference.”

The IPSF Student Exchange Programme: Expanding Horizons for Pharmacy Students



The International Pharmaceutical Students' Federation (IPSF) is a global organization representing pharmacy students and recent graduates, committed to advancing public health and pharmacy education through international collaboration. One of its flagship initiatives, the Student Exchange Programme (SEP), provides pharmacy students with a unique opportunity to gain professional exposure beyond their home countries.

Through SEP, students participate in short-term professional attachments in hospitals, community pharmacies, research institutions, pharmaceutical industry, and public health settings across the world. The programme is designed to enhance practical skills beyond the classroom, expose students to diverse healthcare systems, and promote cross-cultural understanding. Beyond professional development, SEP fosters confidence, leadership, and a global outlook essential for the modern pharmacist. Cultural exchange remains a core pillar of SEP, allowing participants to experience new traditions, languages, and perspectives while representing their institutions and countries with professionalism and pride.

The Student Exchange Programme under PSAZ

Within Zambia, the Pharmaceutical Students' Association of Zambia (PSAZ) serves as the national platform through which pharmacy students access IPSF's Student Exchange Programme. Through structured coordination and mentorship, PSAZ ensures that Zambian pharmacy students are well-prepared to engage meaningfully in international exchange opportunities.

The vision for SEP under PSAZ is centered on growth, inclusivity, quality, and sustainability, guided by the following objectives:

- Increasing Student Participation
- Improving awareness, mentorship, and guidance to encourage wider student involvement.

- Strengthening International Partnerships
- Expanding collaborations with diverse host countries to broaden exchange opportunities.
- Enhancing the Quality of Exchanges
- Ensuring placements provide relevant professional exposure aligned with students' academic and career goals.
- Capacity Building and Knowledge Transfer
- Encouraging returned exchange students to share skills and insights through workshops and peer engagement.
- Positioning Zambian Pharmacy Students Globally
- Promoting professionalism and excellence so Zambian students are recognized as competent and competitive internationally.

Coordination of SEP by Tinotenda Manobo

"My journey as a pharmacy student has been shaped by a belief that true professional growth occurs at the intersection of knowledge, experience, and exposure. Engagement in student leadership and international programs has broadened my understanding of pharmacy, not merely as a profession, but as a global responsibility.

Serving as the Student Exchange Officer (SEO) under PSAZ, I act as the bridge between Zambian pharmacy students and the global IPSF network. My responsibilities include coordinating incoming and outgoing exchanges, promoting awareness of SEP, supporting applicants throughout the application process, liaising with host and sending associations, and ensuring professionalism and cultural preparedness of participants. This role allows me to advocate for students while ensuring that SEP opportunities remain accessible, transparent, and impactful. More importantly, it enables me to contribute toward building a generation of pharmacists who are globally aware, professionally grounded, and committed to excellence."



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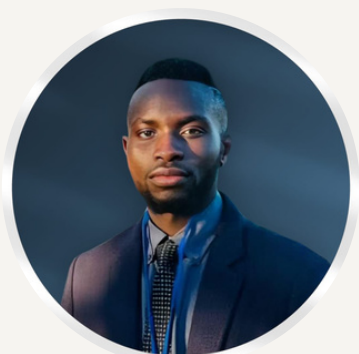
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Your achievements strengthen
the future of Pharmacy