



Association for Supportive Counsellors  
& Holistic Practitioners (Pty) Ltd  
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SAQA recognized professional body (ID 984)  
with NQF registered designations

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## **SPECIAL CIRCULAR APRIL 2024 – RE. SERIOUS CRITICISM OF THE WELLNESS BUSINESS**

Dear ASCHP member,

This matter unfortunately affects all of us in the wellness industry. Please take note of the following important issue. It recently came to our attention that an article appeared in the Mail and Guardian of 5<sup>th</sup> April 2024 under the heading: *Charlatans in the Wellness Business* written by Benjamin Smart, a lecturer at UJ.

The content was overly negative and judgmental as the author generalised largely in the expression of his unfounded personal opinions; He surmised that ASCHP counsellors are not fit or qualified to support people with mental challenges, and could be at risk of legal action. ASCHP management was unpleasantly surprised as the author never consulted with any ASCHP official to ascertain whether his 'facts' were valid and objective. Neither did he succeed in painting an authentic picture of what wellness really is about. What seems to be a personal vendetta has no place in our ethos.

We rest assured that our members are fully cognisant of the fact that wellness is a salutogenic and not a pathogenic approach, and hence we do not diagnose and treat in the medical sense. It aims basically to enhance systemic wellbeing of client by facilitating self-care. Hence, it is flawed to compare wellness-oriented counsellors to HPCSA psychologists as they do not share the same scope of practice or objectives. Smart is clearly not aware of the fact that the ASCHP had to submit a scope of practice for approval to the HPCSA, prior to its establishment.

We found the article content not to be constructive and even offensive and will surely follow it up with the newspaper in consultation with legal counsel to

set the record straight. Nevertheless, such unnecessary negative publicity could somewhat harm the wellness industry, if we allow it, and thus we cannot leave it at that. Although the ASCHP will do its part, it is important to realise that we are all collectively responsible to defend our occupation as counsellors. It is time for the thousands of counsellors country-wide, who are not psychologists, to stand up and speak out about our vocation and even consider writing to the newspaper. We solicit the support of all our members in resisting unfair criticism and resistance to bodymind healthcare. The ASCHP maintains that wellness counsellors perform a much-needed service in the helping professions in South Africa that amicably complements mental healthcare.

Wellness is not Mickey Mouse, but is a global movement based on a holistic approach, that it is backed up by research on many levels. Furthermore, peer counselling is simply at heart a ministry of love and compassion from one person to a fellow human being, beyond the severe medicalisation of healthcare. Wellness counsellors, in terms of the mandate of the professional body has the right to practice ethically within recognised scope in a valid occupation/designation and as such to continue to earn their justifiable living. This is what the ASCHP firmly stands for.

We will follow up on this and keep our members in the loop.

Kind regards,

Dr. Liezl Herholdt (CEO), on behalf of ASCHP management and Advisory Board.

8 April 2024