

## **“THE SAFE USE OF MEDICINES”**

### ***SOLVING THE PROBLEM OF ILLITERACY AND MEDICINE COMPLIANCE WITH SPEAKING BOOKS.***

You could have heard a pin drop in the Tshepisoong Community Centre (located on the Western outskirts of Johannesburg) on the 25<sup>th</sup> October, 2010. There wasn't room for another chair in the hall, filled with nurses, community workers, social workers, home based care givers, nursing lecturers and many more. They had all come for a single purpose. To get their hands on the latest Speaking Book being “*The Safe Use of Medicines*.”

Elizabeth Matare, CEO of SADAG (South African Depression and Anxiety Support Group, introduced the book to the eager audience, explaining how to turn the battery operated book on and off as well as playing the recordings whilst showing the beautifully illustrated pages.

Emma Andrews, Director, External Medical Division of Pfizer (USA) in Johannesburg for the launch, was enthusiastic about the project. “At the core of what we strive for is that our medicines are used safely and effectively. The problem is how to reach low income, illiterate populations? This book which focuses on Anglophile Africa, does a great deal to reach this population. The training of community workers, caregivers and patients will benefit greatly from this book.”

Being able to get people to stay on their medicines is just one of the many topics that are touched on in the 16 pages. Adds Andrews: “People want to know how medicines are made, where they can buy them? They need to know they should never share their medicines and if they have any adverse effects they must speak only to their doctors, not stop them.”

This is Pfizer's seventh book with Brian Julius and Speaking Books. “It was just over 2 years ago that we embarked on this incredible journey with Pfizer to reach disadvantaged communities in Africa, the Americas, India and China. With the involvement and support of many of Pfizer's in-country offices, we have created and produced Speaking Book in the local languages to meet a variety of critical health issues including Malaria, Hypertension, Not Smoking and Clinical Trials.”

Joining Andrews in South Africa for the launch was Jack Watters, Vice President of External Medical Affairs of Pfizer in New York. “It's vital for us to get the information and message to as many people as possible. You've only done half of the job by producing the medicine, although that's a very important half. The second thing is making sure they get to the right people and they understand their safe and proper use. This is a wonderful book. I received my first copy in my office in Manhattan and when I turned it on I was immediately in the environment it was designed for. That's the power of the speaking book!” comments Watters enthusiastically.

“Wherever I've turned it on people have sat up and listened. This is a very powerful tool that meets a real need. It's not about any one particular medicine – this can work for anyone's medicines, it's non-partisan. It's about information and that's what gives people the ability to take control of their own rights.

“I particularly like the page explaining the difference between prescription and over the counter medicines as well as the message about don’t give your medicines to other people – they are for you. That’s what I believe is the art of the speaking book. It offers a firm grasp of the obvious, which is a very special skill.

“Sadly there are so many counterfeit and fake medicines available and people don’t know better. This book will go a long way to help this. The book is the setting in which you put the jewel. A product takes billions and billions to develop over 12 years which can be squandered if people don’t understand what to do with it.”

By the time SADAG had finished handing out the book to the excited audience, each person was eagerly turning the pages and different sounds rang out around the hall. One lady commented she would show this to as many people as she could. Another that her community would really benefit so much from this book and she was so happy she had come today.

“The most exciting part of this is that it adds another dimension to what we do,” said Brian Daniel, CEO of Pfizer South Africa. “We are striving to give as many people access to our medicines and help reach our full potential as a nation. We want to reach physicians, nurses and pharmacists with this book, to educate and build relationships by offering educational opportunities. This book adds a totally different dimension by reaching out to people on how to take medicines.

“This is not about marketing for us. We hope to reach people all over the country with the book, particularly through our Edumobiles which travel to rural areas. With the high rate of illiteracy in these areas pamphlets just don’t work.”



**Brian M Julius | Books of Hope LLC**  
T: 843-589-9029 | C: 843-298-1017

bj@booksofhope.com | www.booksofhope.com  
*Speaking Books for Low Literacy Health Care*