

IBD Interest Group Meeting

Date: Saturday 01 August 2026

Venue: NH Hotel, Johannesburg

This year's Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) special interest group meeting fell in the Gastro Foundation's 20th anniversary year, and the depth of knowledge among attendees and speakers spoke to the foundation's impact over two decades — not just in spreading knowledge, but in creating spaces where complex topics can be discussed openly and learning carries on long after the day ends.

As a paediatric gastroenterology fellow, I find IBD is really where paediatric and adult practice meet. Hearing the adult gastroenterology perspective often gives a preview of where paediatric management is headed. It was a privilege to be in a room where South Africa's leading IBD researchers and clinicians come together to share and build on each other's knowledge.

This was my first special interest group meeting, both as a listener and a presenter, and the day was engaging from start to finish. Dr Papavarnavas opened with a talk on the Shingrix vaccine and the challenges of managing herpes zoster in IBD. Dr Seabi followed with a practical session on drug-drug interactions — not just the medications we see every day, but the supplements and herbal remedies we rarely think to ask about. Dr Al-Farhan joined us from Kuwait to walk through the clinical utility of intestinal ultrasound (IUS) in IBD, covering both the evidence base and how it plays out in practice. Dr Mokgoko then built on that groundwork, taking our understanding of IUS a step further with a focus on the local context. Prof Watermeyer looked ahead at the future of IBD therapy, unpacking the mechanisms and use of IL-23 inhibitors. My own presentation on the current landscape of paediatric IBD came next and was well received.

After brunch, Dr Lala, our endoscopy expert, spoke on the need for constant vigilance during surveillance endoscopy, since subtle dysplasia is easy to miss. Dr Surridge tackled the controversial question of appendectomy in ulcerative colitis — informative and genuinely entertaining. Dr Bebington followed with a surgeon's perspective on the challenges of pouch disease. Closing the day, Dr Van Der Schyff offered a different angle altogether: the ethical challenges around funding in IBD, and the importance of working closely with third-party funders to secure the best care for our patients.

It was a day of learning, networking, and shared enthusiasm, run with the usual outstanding organisation and attention to detail. A special thank you to the Gastro Foundation for including a paediatric talk this year, and to Ms Bini Seale and the sponsors for making the day possible.