Test and Measurement Conference 2010

Angelique Botha · Edward Peter Tarnow

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The Test and Measurement Conference 2010 was held from 7 to 10 November at the Drakensberg Sports Resort, Southern Drakensberg, South Africa. This year the annual conference was held for the 32nd time and attended by 150 delegates. The delegates were typically representative of calibration and testing laboratories that are accredited to ISO/IEC 17025 by SANAS. However, it is encouraging to see the increasing attendance by technicians, analysts and laboratory management from non-accredited laboratories.

The conference theme for 2010 was ‘Measurements in Sport, Health and Safety—is there a connection’? Although the relationship between these three areas may not be immediately apparent, taking a closer look reveals the importance of measurement in each of these fields. For instance, if a swimmer breaks a record by half a second, what would the impact be if the length of the pool was found to be 50 mm too short? On the other hand, when you consider performance-enhancing drugs, a few ng/l may be the difference between being found guilty or not.

The conference provided the opportunity to ask questions such as: how reliable are blood pressure measurements that physicians use when prescribing medication? How is it established whether water we drink is fit for consumption?

Following the intense hype of South Africa hosting the Soccer World Cup, the organisers believed that it was vital that the importance of the work done in laboratories be recognised and that laboratory staff take this opportunity to improve their skills.

The key note address was delivered by Prof. Brynn Hibbert from the University of New South Wales, Australia on ‘Sports drug testing—what are the odds’? Other international guests at the conference included John Taverner from Isotech in the UK, Mark Finch from Fluke in the UK and Miloslav Suchanek from ICT Prague in the Czech Republic.

The technical programme typically consisted of contributions on physical metrology, physical testing, metrology in chemistry and chemical testing. This year the conference was encouraged by the number and standard of contributions from academia on the use of measurement science to improve the state of our scientific knowledge.

The conference has traditionally provided a platform for laboratory staff to discuss, share and debate measurement and testing issues. The year 2010 proved to be unique because – for the first time – high-level academia rubbed shoulders with practicality and this provided for interesting and meaningful interaction between measurement science theory and practical measurement and testing activities in industry.

To ensure measurement continues to play its rightful role in ensuring the quality of products, new measurement techniques must be researched and developed, but at the same time, these need to be implemented by laboratory staff. This conference provided an opportunity for the two worlds to join hands and work towards a common goal.

A. Botha (✉) · E. P. Tarnow
National Metrology Institute of South Africa (NMISA),
Private Bag X34, Lynnwood Ridge 0040, South Africa
e-mail: abotha@nmisa.org