

Introducing the new *South African Journal of Child Health*

The human body is an intricate structure with multiple different organ systems that, in health, function in unison. Life would be easy if there was a law dictating that dysfunction could only affect one organ at a time. A patient would, say, be under a neurologist forever – or at least until the neurological abnormality has resolved. But life is not like that. A typical scenario is the patient with atopic eczema. He or she will not only stay awake at night because of persistent itching, but will often also sneeze and have itchy eyes. On nights when the eczema is under control the asthma may take its toll. As if that were not enough, multiple lengthy visits for health care are needed, with the patient trailing from one dedicated specialist clinic to the next. In the pursuit of our special interests we often forget to consider the whole patient. Some may respond self-righteously to the latter statement – they routinely supply patients with medicine from other sub-specialties! But a pertinent question is how good the quality of service they offer really is, considering that it is likely to be based on outdated knowledge from ‘medical officer’ days. A recent study reported that ‘prescribing patterns and indicators of prescription quality show wide variability depending on the prescriber’s medical specialty’. This will vary even within treatment of the same condition and ‘has important implications for priority setting in information, continuous education and research’.¹

Any clinician who has recently prepared to present a journal club understands the difficulty of choosing manuscripts. It seems there is no end to the number of articles and new journals being published, and paperless web-based journals are also making their mark.

So why is there a need for yet another journal?

In spite of the fact that children in South Africa constitute more than 50% of our over 40 million population, we have never had a peer-reviewed journal dedicated to their health. It is with this in mind that we hope this first issue of the *SAJCH* will be received favourably by the South African medical and wider health care community. The aim of this journal is to create space for the publication of medical conditions affecting children. Not only will *SAJCH* offer us a common platform – a place of the meeting of minds as it were – it will, we hope, also blur the barriers between general practitioners and specialists. More than anyone else primary care practitioners bear the brunt of the inadequacies of our health care system, and a journal in which they can also participate is well overdue. *SAJCH* is a forum to which all disciplines, general or specialist,

are invited to submit manuscripts, comment on published articles and raise issues of concern. A common journal can potentially create an opportunity for better understanding between clinicians and be an accessible source of continued medical education, without which our service to our patients cannot improve. We hope articles published in *SAJCH* will contribute to the health of children – health as defined by the World Health Organization as ‘... not only the absence of infirmity and disease but also a state of physical, mental and social well-being’.

SAJCH is a journal for the child health specialties and general practitioners with a special interest in child health. Through the quality of its content – including research papers, editorials, coverage of topical child health care issues, book reviews and correspondence – it will provide a vehicle for education, for communication and for influencing opinion with the medical community and the public.

SAJCH is peer-reviewed by a panel of leading academics, practitioners and specialists. It will be listed in the SAMA website and in Africa Journals Online (AJOL). The intention is for it to be internationally indexed. In due course a CPD programme will be provided.

Nonhlanhla P Khumalo

Editor



Reference

1. Vallano A, Montane E, Arnau JM, et al. Medical speciality and pattern of medicines prescription. *Eur J Clin Pharmacol* 2004; 60(10): 725-730.

We would like to reflect *SAJCH's* dedication to the health of children by featuring child art on the cover of each issue. We therefore invite children of all ages to submit their best art. Featured artists will be acknowledged on the contents page. Let the drawing begin!

