

From the Editor's Desk

December 2011

Another year has rapidly flown by and lots of exciting things have been happening in South African optometry as any regular reader or contributor to this journal can easily establish through perusal of the many and diverse original papers and reviews of interesting and stimulating topics that have been published in the journal during 2011. The journal has grown from that of earlier days where very few papers of an original nature, or involving any significant research, were ever included to that where authors are waiting, on average, about six to nine months for their papers to be published. Gradually one can expect that more papers to the journal will unfortunately be declined as the overall number of manuscripts received from South Africa and elsewhere expands each year. It is thus slowly but surely becoming more difficult to have a paper accepted for publication in *The South African Optometrist* and that is ultimately good for the general quality of the journal, despite the unpleasant sense of discouragement that authors may experience when they occasionally have their papers declined. The average length of the journal has also grown significantly over the last few years despite the number of issues remaining constant at four per year. Reviewers are also becoming more proficient and effective than in the past and therefore the overall quality of manuscripts has gradually improved as a culture of improved research and academic and scientific writing has been

promoted at the various academic and tertiary educational universities that offer optometry as courses of study. Contributions from outside South Africa have become more frequent and that also should play an important future role in extending the influence and reach of the journal. Post-graduate and research-oriented activities at the different universities are also growing and the journal and the South African Optometric Association have played an important and essential role towards fostering and supporting such developments. South Africa, as we all are aware, has significant social and other problems that require urgent attention, and given many of the limitations that are relevant in the Southern African context generally the journal has done very well. If I look back over the years of my professional and academic career, I am highly encouraged by the improvements that have taken place towards creating more opportunities and possibilities for basic and advanced research in optometry and particularly relating to eye and vision care and science, and I am happily confident that this is only the beginning and much more will follow as the years advance. Research, while still an under-developed area, is none-the-less attracting more students and others that are starting to understand the advantages of having a strong research capacity in South Africa in fields such as optometry and this is also leading to greater availability of financial and other resources to support



research-related activities. And, indeed, it is to a large extent through such activities that advancements in optometric education and ultimately in clinical practice are promoted or established. The patients, who are seen daily in clinical and practice environments, are similarly benefited through the more academic and research-related aspects of optometry and this is not always so clearly understood or remembered by those educating students in optometry or examining patients in these different settings. But, there remains much to be done by all of us to further develop and promote a culture of excellence in optometric research and to more effectively advance opportunities in this area for those with an inclination towards these more theoretical or experimental activities.

I would like to thank all of our authors who contributed many papers to the journal during the year 2011. Also great appreciation is extended to the different reviewers of papers to the journal, all of whom made important contributions towards improving the overall quality of manuscripts that were eventually published in the journal during the year. The South African Optometric Association and especially Jeanine Ferreira, our online publisher and web site coordinator, are also thanked for their efforts and support without which *The*

South African Optometrist would not exist. Enjoy the December holidays and all the very best for the New Year and the forthcoming year, 2012!

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