

From the Editor's Desk

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An exciting year is almost over with a very successful World Cup Soccer tournament that flew by far too quickly after many years of planning and activity. *The South African Optometrist* is also developing very nicely and the total numbers of papers from South Africa and the rest of Africa, and occasionally from elsewhere is also gradually expanding. For over 70 years the journal has been publishing papers and other contributions relating to optometry. The journal, besides being a rich source of continuing education for those using it, also represents an important historic record of optometric development and growth in South Africa from an initial part-time qualification to, what is now, a four-year degree programme offered by four different South African universities with options of further study through various means such as masters and doctoral degrees and other post-graduate courses, for example, involving diagnostic pharmaceutical methods and agents or areas such as sports vision. Hopefully, the scope of optometry will further expand to include therapeutic agents in the near future and perhaps, other post-graduate certificates or diplomas may become available in areas such as binocular vision, low vision and contact lenses, *et cetera*. Research activities in South Africa are also slowly expanding and although we may not, as yet, easily compete with some very developed regions of the world, optometric academics and others in South Africa

are making contributions towards establishing and growing research capacity, and some of the research produced is of an internationally highly-regarded standard. But further work remains to promote and properly fund research in vision and practical limitations in research instrumentation and sometimes facilities remain relevant. At a more theoretical level we can compete in some areas of research in vision science and eye care although this still requires the appropriate mindset and proper preparation of graduates and postgraduates. To some extent we have the situation where far too little emphasis on research activities is still typical of most, or even all, of the universities that are presently involved in educating South African optometrists. But, certainly things have improved dramatically over the last decade or two when optometric research in South Africa was very limited or almost non-existent. The clinical abilities and skills of graduates are also much better in general when one compares the situation to that of the past and if all goes well these trends will continue into the future so that, in say, another twenty years the situation will be further advanced both with reference to clinical and research-oriented activities. The internet is likely to have a major impact on the nature and physical structures of universities and perhaps the universities of the future will be more truly clinical and research facilities with far less or even no direct teaching taking place



since online courses are probably going to replace a lot of the more formal lectures that are currently happening in the physical structures and environment of today's universities. Like the rhino in South Africa and elsewhere, the days and longevity of the common or garden-variety academic or lecturer-teacher are also limited. The unnecessary and criminal loss of rhinos, and other animals like this one, from the planet is undoubtedly the far more serious problem. The researcher, and especially the more-talented researcher, is likely to more easily avoid extinction in the modern world with its rapid advances in communication and technology. So, academics are probably well-advised to seriously develop their research capabilities and skills should they wish to remain relevant with time and modern developments in the knowledge environment.

I would like to thank our authors and also the reviewers of papers who all contributed in 2010 towards improving the overall quality of the journal. The South African Optometric Association and also Jeanine Ferreira, our online publisher and web site coordinator, are also thanked for their efforts and support without which there would not be a journal at all. Enjoy the holidays and all the very best for 2011.

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