

From the Editor's Desk

As another year draws to a close optometry is certainly growing in strength and the profession is increasingly having an international impact on eye, vision and health care. But many of the ideas, concepts and methods of optometry (and sometimes of ophthalmology also) are outdated or are still changing very slowly and perusal of many of the more scientific vision and eye care journals worldwide will quickly indicate major, and occasionally almost unbelievable, modern advances in many areas such as keratoconus and in the treatment of serious ocular problems like Leber's hereditary neuropathy; although a rare condition it is one that has a severe impact on vision function but current research and work on a genetic treatment holds hope for sufferers of this and, and other neuropathies caused through factors or conditions such as multiple sclerosis, for example. Some very exciting things are happening in the many areas of vision science, ophthalmology, pharmacology and genetics and optometry needs to become much more closely aligned with some of these areas so as to contribute and gradually become an integral part of some of these modern fields of study and research. In various parts of the world this process has occurred to some extent or, at least, is beginning to occur and certainly the future for optometry will be dependent upon the extent to which the education and activities of the profession evolve to encompass some of these modern trends in eye and vision care that are as yet mostly still in their infancy with respect to the measurement and management of the visual system and its underlying physical, physiological and perceptual apparatus and various dysfunctions of this apparatus.

It is certainly stimulating, but possibly not very easy to imagine just how far things might develop in medicine and the many allied or related fields of scientific exploration in, say 50 or 100 years time. Will we perhaps have the option of removing the natural eye (or both eyes) and replacing one or both with artificial eyes that can sense infrared radiation under dark conditions such as during driving, or will this step become somewhat unnecessary since most vehicles will most likely operate independently under auto-control and global navigational systems? Will such an artificial eye have an auto-zoom function that will allow inspection of very fine details at almost a microscopic level or enable immediate and easy and more detailed inspection of far away visual information? Will we need to periodically upgrade our vision (computer) operating system or software just like we tend to do already with personal computers or cell phones? Will such systems have access to the internet and its vast store of useful or useless information, which will appear to float in front of us as if in a head-mounted visual or virtual display; and hopefully or indeed almost certainly at an incredibly faster rate than is typical of our present modern day technology. Will we be able to retrieve memory information more easily than presently through feed-forward transfer of information? When will the first transplant of a whole natural animal eye occur? The chances are that this event is not that far off in the future and already transplantation of stem and other cells into the retina and brain are taking place for the treatment of many medical and other problems that otherwise would not fully, or perhaps, even partially be amenable to rehabilitative or other current treatments.

The Editor and Editorial Board would like to thank everyone connected with the journal for their efforts over the last year; and especially the authors and reviewers of papers without whom there would not be a journal, and also the journal publishers E-Doc and the SAOA are thanked for their support and efforts towards insuring that *The South African Optometrist* is able to contribute towards the historic and scientific record of the many activities that are taking place in optometry in this and other parts of the world. And, to our readers, have a good December and all the best for 2008!