

From the Editor's Desk

March 2014

Some very exciting changes are about to occur and so this is the final issue of the journal under the name, *The South African Optometrist*. The journal, *The South African Optometrist* has had a very successful period over the last two decades and only peer-reviewed and original material of a scholarly nature has been published over that time. This was not always the case for the journal which nonetheless has a long and illustrious history having been published regularly since its early days in the mid-1930s. So, the journal is rapidly approaching its centennial issue. To the journal's immense credit, it is currently the only journal in Africa in optometry, ophthalmology and vision science that receives research subsidies via the Department of Higher Education and Training (DoHET) of South Africa. These funds from the DoHET have played a crucial role in improving optometric research in South Africa and especially in supporting younger researchers in their development. In 2014, the journal is about to undergo substantial changes in management, processes and style that will, we believe, strongly enhance its intellectual and international impact. The South African Optometric Association (SAOA) will be partnering with the African Vision Research Institute (AVRI) and the African Ophthalmology Federation (AOF) to rebrand the journal. The overall responsibility for administration of the journal will change from the SAOA to AVRI. The journal publisher and primary website will both change in the near future. Also, the journal will be renamed and the current Editorial Board will be reconstituted to include not only those of the current members that wish to remain on the new board but other authorities will be invited to become part of the newly constituted board. The editorial board will thus be strengthened through the inclusion of both African and international authorities in Optometry, Ophthalmology, Vision Science and perhaps others from related fields. In the future, the journal will have two editors, one from optometry and one from ophthalmology and after peer-review papers from both disciplines will be included in the new online journal. This is a very exciting

and inclusive change that we think will strongly diversify the journal content, impact and international reputation and influence. Another new element is that a managing deputy editor (Peter Clarke-Farr from the Cape University of Technology) has also been appointed to facilitate administrative procedures as regards the journal.

Given the costs for the new online platform for submission and review (which is outsourced) of papers, the major issue of importance to potential authors and others is that page charges will be levied on all papers accepted for publication, except under some well-defined circumstances. The page charges are still to be finalized but AVRI also has some funds available which will be used, where required, to assist researchers from the developing world and authors will be able to apply for such funding. It is our intention that funding (page charges) should not restrict the publication of scholarly papers of a high standard. Authors from developing countries will be able to apply for assistance should they have limited funds to support their publications. Similarly, younger and less-experienced researchers in South Africa and elsewhere will be supported as far as possible. Papers will in future also need to be submitted via an online editing system and not directly to the editors. At this stage, these steps are being put in place and thus some delay in the appearance of the next issue of the journal under its new name may result but we hope that the new issue will be ready by mid-year at the very latest.

Our current publisher, Jeanine Ferreira, is sincerely thanked for her tremendous efforts over the previous years to ensure that the journal was produced on time and in a thorough and careful manner so as to properly promote its aims of being a highly-regarded scholarly journal that reflects the activities of South African academics and researchers and which also provides an excellent source of continuing education to optometrists and others in the eye care fields and professions. The South African Optometric Association is also thanked for its dedicated support over the many years where the journal costs were their sole responsibility via contributions from its



membership. The SAOA is also congratulated on its vision in supporting a larger role for this journal that will immensely benefit the optometrists and ophthalmologists of Africa. It is also possibly the first time globally that the two professions have come together to work on a journal like this one. The new journal and AVRI are also wished all the very best towards implementing these changes so that the journal becomes even more relevant and vital in terms of its unique contributions towards African eye care and vision science.

Alan Rubin

Editor

Department of Optometry

University of Johannesburg

