

African vision eye health

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Technological developments involving artificial intelligence (AI) such as ChatGPT will have profound influences on scientific research, and preparation and publication of research articles and literature reviews. Similarly, peer review of articles for journals will likely be affected. Sophisticated software for plagiarism has impacted, mostly positively, in improving the quality of publications. Over time and with AI reviewing, human editors and reviewers may become less relevant, or possibly even redundant, and AI may be used for evaluation and decisions regarding possible publication of academic and scientific research – hopefully, not too soon as after a very long time as editor of *The South African Optometrist* and its successor, *African Vision and Eye Health*, the thought of automated article review and acceptance is not a particularly thrilling prospect. This is my last year as one of the chief editors of this journal and it has been gratifying to contribute to the upward trajectory of the journal and to have been involved in changes that occurred over the previous two or so decades. *The South African Optometrist* had a very lengthy history and for much of its existence, the South African Optometric Association (SAOA) was solely responsible for its support and funding. When I was a much younger academic, Prof. William Harris, the editor at the time played a very constructive role in advancing the journal from one that almost entirely reprinted articles from other sources because of the lack of original contributions. With his admirable guidance, the journal moved rapidly to the point where only original material was used, and the quality of publications improved profoundly so that optometrists sometimes found the content challenging – the inevitable sign of scientific progress in any field of activity and of advancement in the quality of articles in academic and scientific journals. After I became editor (with the encouragement of Prof. Harris), the journal continued to advance, irrespective of some constraints as initially there were few academics and/or researchers in optometry, with or without postgraduate degrees. However, this changed over the years with corresponding improvement in the journal. Professor Harris was instrumental in getting the journal accredited by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) so that authors and universities received research subsidies, and he and I attempted to get greater involvement from ophthalmology but initially this was unsuccessful (mainly because of my youthful inexperience and arrogance; now I am much older but still inexperienced and arrogant; learning being difficult for some!). So, for many years the journal was the only eye- and vision-related journal in South Africa to be accredited. (More recently, the journal of the Ophthalmological Society of South Africa became similarly accredited.) Later, the journal moved to the management of the African Vision Research Institute (AVRI) with other collaborating organisations, and with its name change, ophthalmologists, optometrists and vision scientists from Africa and elsewhere submitted and published articles and the African and international influence of the journal developed over the last decade especially, and today we are included in databases such as Scopus and others (such as Web of Science Emerging Sources Citation Index). We now have a journal impact factor (only 0.6) but for much of the past 90 years there was no impact factor at all. None of this could have been achieved without contributions of many people and organisations, such as the SAOA and AVRI, including past and present publishers of the journal as well as the authors, reviewers, co-editors (Dr Femi Oderinlo – for Ophthalmology; and Prof. Peter Clarke-Farr as the Managing Editor) and our Editorial Board.

Thank you to the reviewers (of articles and other submissions) who ensure that the standard of the journal continues to improve and that journal articles are fairly and, as far as possible, promptly reviewed. Authors are also thanked for their important contributions and for their patience during the, sometimes, lengthy process of article review, revision and publication. I would also like to acknowledge Dr Femi Oderinlo and Prof. Peter Clarke-Farr, working with you both has been a pleasure. The AVRI and its leadership (such as Prof. Kovin Naidoo), the SAOA and the African Ophthalmology Council (AOC) are also thanked for their support, and that especially applies to AVRI. I would also like to thank the many people within AOSIS Publishing with whom I, Dr Oderinlo and Prof. Clarke-Farr regularly interact for their prompt

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and helpful assistance whenever required. To the readers of the journal and everyone else involved in whatever capacity with the journal, all the very best for the future. Good fortune to my successor as the new Chief-Editor (for Optometry). I leave the journal in very capable hands, and have no doubts, that the journal will continue to contribute positively

towards knowledge generation, and further advancement in ophthalmic and vision sciences, and towards improving eye and healthcare in Africa and elsewhere.

Prof. Alan Rubin, Chief-Editor
African Vision Eye Health