

# Variety is the spice

This issue of the *South African Journal of Child Health (SAJCH)* is characterised by variety. Variety is also typical of childhood ailments and captures our endeavour to serve the whole child health care community. The birth of a new baby is supposed to be an amazing and happy time, filled with wonderful warm emotions. If the new arrival has a deformity, the parents suddenly have to cope with major emotional turmoil. Coping is made more difficult in children with cleft lip/palate because of the difficulty in feeding with all its consequences. As health care providers attempting to help parents through this difficult time, we need mechanisms to evaluate what we do and how well we do it – in addition to assessing the effectiveness of the tools we use. The finding by Bellardie and Harris that the ‘Cleft Lip and Palate Parent Information Leaflet’ is such a tool may encourage its use in other centres. Similarly, the study by Ogunlesi and co-authors describes in their setting the profile of patients with cerebral palsy, another ‘all too common’ yet ‘too little studied’ condition. It is hoped that this study will encourage well-designed prospective studies that will not only identify disease determinants but make recommendations for prevention.

The overwhelming burden of HIV/AIDS and resultant infections in our country has been the reason why it has dominated the ‘Hot Topics’ section of the journal. The spotlight in this issue falls on vaccines, firstly with a look at the new widely recommended pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (which was covered in greater depth by the same authors in the June issue of our parent journal the *SAMJ*), and secondly with a review on immunisation recommendations for HIV-infected children. The latter is consistent with the desirability of more cost-effective prevention rather than treatment of disease. In the same vein, the study by Matji and co-authors reports determinants of infant feeding intent in HIV-positive pregnant women, which may contribute to disease transmission.

The study by Smith, Adnams and Eley reports on one of the earliest cohorts of children in this country in whom neurological (and neurocognitive) function was objectively assessed before and after short-term (6 months) treatment with antiretroviral therapy. The study is limited by small numbers and was not blinded, but it is informative. And although the study found neither significant improvement nor worsening in level of

function, it did demonstrate significant baseline neurological impairment in participants. The latter is an important factor which is not often considered when costing the burden of the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

Unusual presentations of common conditions can be not only a useful opportunity for revision but often, because of the dramatic presentation, also ‘the one case’ used to file memory about a condition. Such is the case with the reports in this issue of ulcerative chickenpox, polythelia and supernumerary cervical and thoracic vertebrae, and an unusual cause of glycosuria.

We hope that the varied articles in this issue of *SAJCH* make for interesting and informative reading. You are invited to participate in our now accredited continuing medical education (CME) section. As always, we welcome suggestions and contributions that can improve the quality of the journal and invite you to visit our website ([www.sajch.org.za](http://www.sajch.org.za)) where complete PDFs of all published articles are available free of charge. It has also recently become possible to search for articles through Google Scholar.

Yours in child health care,

**Nonhlanhla P Khumalo, MB ChB, FCDerm, PhD**  
*Editor*



**Congratulations to David Woods and Brian Eley on editing a superb manual which they describe as a 'self-directed distance learning course'. The book comprehensively covers HIV and its management and is written in simple language. The latter is quite an achievement considering the number of highly skilled contributors. The book is intended for both medical and nursing professionals, and the use of case studies would be ideal for small-group discussion by medical and nursing students.**

**The book is entitled *Childhood HIV, A Learning Programme for Professionals* (Electric Book Works, 2008) and costs R100. Royalties go to the not-for-charity organisation Eduhealthcare.**

