



Editor-in-Chief, Professor Ruchika Meel

Department of Internal Medicine, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of the Witwatersrand and Mediclinic Sandton Hospital, Johannesburg, South Africa

My reflections on the 2024–2025 South African Heart[®] Journal year

The 2024–2025 editorial year in review for the SA Heart[®] Journal reflects a dynamic and impactful year in cardiovascular research and clinical practice. Following a brief pause during 2023–2024, the journal successfully returned to regular publication with 4 consecutive issues. Each edition was anchored around key themes: the congress issue (*Cardiology Connections*), valvular heart disease, coronary artery disease, heart failure, and training and research. Educational features, such as the electrocardiography quiz and cardiac imaging quiz, remained integral, continuing to enhance clinical learning and engagement.

The congress issue, featuring the “cardiology connections” theme at the 2024 SA Heart[®] Congress, spotlighted the vital role of interdisciplinary collaboration in advancing patient care. The “access to healthcare imbizo” was a standout, fostering dialogue between clinicians, funders, and policymakers. A landmark addition to the scientific programme was the inaugural themed session on rheumatology and cardiac disease, which highlighted the complex interplay between systemic inflammation and cardiovascular pathology. Notably, this session marked a historic moment in the Congress’s history, with most speakers being female clinicians and researchers – a powerful testament to the rising influence and leadership of women in cardiovascular science.

Valvular heart disease continues to pose a significant clinical challenge in South Africa, where the combined burden of rheumatic, congenital, and degenerative valve pathology reflects both historical and emerging trends. This themed December 2024 issue of the SA Heart[®] Journal brought together a compelling collection of research, case series, and expert perspectives.

The March 2025 issue of the SA Heart[®] Journal presented a focused and timely examination of coronary artery disease (CAD) within the South African healthcare landscape. Supported by a guest editorial titled *A contemporary perspective on coronary artery disease in sub-Saharan Africa* by K McCutcheon, the issue explored the shifting epidemiology of CAD, driven by urbanisation, evolving lifestyle patterns, and entrenched health disparities. Based on data from the Tygerberg Registry of Acute Coronary Syndromes (TRACS), the Editor’s Pick article titled *The hub and spoke model: Is it out of reach in South Africa?* offered a critical analysis of the feasibility and clinical impact of implementing a hub and spoke model for acute coronary syndrome care.

The June 2025 issue of the SA Heart[®] Journal centred on the growing burden of heart failure in South Africa, framed by a guest editorial titled *Living with heart failure* by S Allie and K Sliwa. The editorial emphasised the urgent need for holistic, patient-centred care models, particularly in low-resource settings, where comorbidities and late presentations complicate management. This issue reinforced the need for multidisciplinary collaboration, early diagnosis, and locally adapted

guidelines to improve outcomes in heart failure care across South Africa's diverse healthcare landscape. A special tribute article by former copyeditor Ilze de Kock celebrated 20 years of collaboration within the SA Heart® Journal, acknowledging its evolution and contributions to cardiovascular science in the region.

The September issue of the journal emphasised training and research in the South African environment from the perspectives of clinical cardiology and clinician scientists. The articles highlighted the dire need for training posts and the shortfalls in the current training programmes in cardiology in the country. We also emphasised the barriers faced by clinician scientists in South Africa and their potential impact on clinician scientist career pathways. In this issue, we introduced additional educational content in the form of the South African Society of Cardiovascular Intervention (SASCI) and Mayo Clinic fellows webinar, and Statistics Made Easy.

As the SA Heart® Congress 2025 in Sandton approaches, themed “unifying hearts and minds”, the journal continues to champion clinical excellence and compassionate care. This year's congress features a comprehensive scientific programme enriched by the contributions of international speakers, offering valuable global perspectives. Further, we pay tribute to Professor Patrick Commerford, a towering figure in the South African Cardiovascular space.

The journal reaffirmed its commitment to being a robust platform for cardiovascular medicine across disciplines, including adult and paediatric cardiology, cardiothoracic surgery, imaging, and basic science. We gratefully acknowledge the dedication of our editorial team, publisher, peer reviewers, readership, and authors, whose collective efforts uphold the journal's quality and relevance. As we celebrate 20 years of the SA Heart® Journal, we honour its legacy and look ahead with a renewed commitment to inclusivity, collaboration, and advancing cardiovascular science.

Ruchika Meel

Editor-in-Chief, SA Heart® Journal