

Something new, again

In March 2011, I wrote the first editorial for a new publication by the Emergency Care Society of South Africa. The publication, which was not peer-reviewed and more in the style of a quarterly magazine, was called *Sanguine*. In writing that editorial I quoted the Roman author and natural philosopher Pliny the Elder who said '*ex Africa semper aliquid novi*' – there is always something new out of Africa. The Society continued to publish *Sanguine* for the next five years, and then made a decision to move in the direction of a peer-reviewed scientific journal as my colleague Simpiwe Sobuwa alludes to on page 2 of this issue. And so, almost a decade after the start of something new, here we are again.

From the outset, it was decided that the South African Journal of Pre-hospital Emergency Care (SAJPEC) would need to be freely available (open access) and, at the same time, produced at minimal cost to the Society. I am pleased to say that this has been possible, with a combination of support from Stellenbosch University and the use of free application software. There are some costs, but these have been kept to an absolute minimum and the most important editorial and peer-review processes carry no costs at all. I believe that adopting the approach that we have, which focuses on the core objective of disseminating new knowledge, the journal will also be sustainable. It must be, to be of value to individual readers and to the profession as a whole. This idea, of less glitter and more value, is very much one that I believe in and one that I feel any professional society needs to embrace.

Perhaps the greatest obstacle in getting a new peer-reviewed journal off the ground in South Africa is the research output subsidy system of the De-

partment of Higher Education and Training (DoHET). While this system provides a crucial revenue stream for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), it is a powerful disincentive to invest in and support the critical early years of new journals. Research output subsidy is only paid to HEIs for research published by affiliated academics in journals accredited by DoHET. Consequently, many such academics who are under pressure to bring in subsidy, will not consider submitting manuscripts to unaccredited journals which all new journals are, by definition, until they can become accredited – in a minimum of two years from inception.

Naturally, the Society aims to apply for DoHET accreditation of SAJPEC as soon as this is possible but there are a number of conditions on which this is based. Meeting most of these is the responsibility of the journal's editorial team. However, one important condition of accreditation will only be met by a collective effort – the condition that published articles must reflect a broad cross-section of affiliations and authors in the discipline, and must not be limited to a single institution or be predominantly linked to the journal's editorial staff. The journal needs contributions from all of the South African HEIs involved in pre-hospital emergency care research if it is to be considered for future accreditation – without this commitment I don't believe that SAJPEC will have a viable future. The first few years, in particular, will require the support of those who would like to see SAJPEC realises its potential. It is up to all of us to make this happen.

Christopher Stein
Editor-in-Chief