

# Editor's notes

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Welcome to the first issue of the South African Dental Journal (SADJ) for 2020. This year holds much promise and potential, and I take great pleasure in wishing you a prosperous year ahead.

Our social media platforms and news feeds have been heavily loaded with the constant reports on the outbreak of yet another respiratory viral infection, in this case the "novel" coronavirus, temporarily named 2019-nCoV.

We have previously faced two betacoronavirus outbreaks in the forms of SARS-CoV and MERS-CoV, both of which cause respiratory illness and may be fatal. However, the spread of the airborne 2019-nCoV is extremely rapid with number higher than the total reported SARS cases of the 2002/2003 outbreak in which 774 people from 17 countries lost their lives.

Initial reports of the 2019-nCoV infection describe the clinical and epidemiologic aspects of this viral infection.<sup>1-3</sup> The World Health Organization (WHO) has estimated the global risk to be "high", but at the time of writing these notes still advised against any travel restrictions being implemented by authorities.

The 13<sup>th</sup> situation report issued by the WHO showed 14 557 confirmed cases globally (305 deaths). Notably 168 of these are from 23 countries outside of China. Although the spread of the virus is rapid, accurate reporting has been hamstrung by many false reports and claims, and paradoxically, also by an information overload dubbed an "infodemic" by the WHO.<sup>4,5</sup>

The potential impact this infection may have on us in South Africa is uncertain, and the sequelae for the vulnerable, immunocompromised or otherwise medically compromised is not yet clear due to the lack of data, but speculation leads to a more negative outlook.



However, the South African Department of Health has published a statement reassuring citizens that health-care facilities and staff are prepared and ready to deal with any case of 2019-nCoV to enter our borders.<sup>6</sup>

For your information and in order to keep up to date, we recommend that reliable sources be used for gathering information such as the WHO<sup>4,5</sup> and the Centres for Disease Control (CDC)<sup>7</sup> pages. This will also assist to curb the spread of misinformation.

Basic infection control procedures and avoidance of close contact with individuals suffering from any acute respiratory illness form the foundation of the WHO recommendations.

I would like to thank the leadership of the South African Dental Association for the opportunity to be a part of the SADJ team. We remain committed and are excited about the year ahead. I must also thank Professor Bill Evans, my predecessor, for his energetic efforts and hard work as the Managing Editor of the SADJ. His academic integrity, breadth and depth of knowledge, and his work ethic are exemplary, and set the bar high, where it should be. His masterful wordsmithing continues to be a source of inspiration.

Thank you for joining us as our readers. As we consider the possibilities this year holds, I look forward to engaging you as our contributors.

## References

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