

EDITORIAL

Orthopaedics past, present and future: The value of communication

Orthopaedics in South Africa has a very rich history which is well documented in various publications such as *To Benefit the Maimed* by Prof GF Domisse and the recent publication of *Orthopaedics in South Africa* by Prof Brookes Heywood and Dr Jos van Niekerk.

Our early history started with the pioneer Dr FP Fouche (1886–1962). He realised that communication and discussion is the cornerstone for developing a profession and achieved prominence as a founder member and the first chairman of the Orthopaedic Surgery Group, which later became the South African Orthopaedic Association (SAOA).

The idea was to get orthopaedic surgeons together for discussions on their research and teaching methods, and to promote the concept of orthopaedics in South Africa by holding regular meetings. This led to the affiliation with the English-speaking associations, including those of Britain, New Zealand, Australia, Canada and America, and regular local and combined meetings were held. The need for publication arose and in 1921 the *Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery (JBJS)* was officially named, having originated out of various smaller publications in Britain. For many years the *JBJS* was the official journal for the SAOA as well.

The SAOA grew and today is an independent association in close contact with the English-speaking associations as well as existing associations in Africa. This contact is maintained by the Presidents, ABC Travelling Fellows and the invited guest speakers from around the globe who regularly attend our congresses.

Through the years changes have taken place which also affected our profession, such as the increase in litigation and modern developments that must be carefully observed and managed.

In order to stimulate our members the *South African Orthopaedic Journal (SAOJ)* was founded in 2002 and today it is a strong instrument in communicating our own research and progress in orthopaedics to our readers.

The ultimate aim is to get it registered as an internationally accredited journal. This process is in progress.

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The way forward is based on promoting our science by publishing the ongoing research from our training hospitals and private practices. By doing this we share our scientific findings and advances with our colleagues and stay up to date with current research and developments in orthopaedics in South Africa. Special issues relevant to our community, such as tuberculosis, HIV, gunshot wounds etc, can be highlighted and sent abroad.

With this in mind, a modern journal should also provide education for our orthopaedic surgeons and registrars. It can teach registrars how to read papers, conduct research, manage projects at international levels, interpret scientific data and use that data in their work.

We have a strong editorial board to review articles and ensure the high standard of our journal.

In summary the SAOA is currently a fully functional and independent association with the *SAOJ* as the communicating instrument linking the members, other associations and researchers.

We as orthopaedic surgeons in South Africa are proud of the quality of our journal and the standard of our training and research.

I think that our founder members and predecessors can be proud of our achievements.



Prof GJ Vlok