
MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

New technology and techniques are seductive. They are often used as marketing tools to gain the competitive advantage, be that actual or perceived. The ethical practice of orthopaedics dictates that we regard these so-called innovations with scepticism. Changes in our practice of orthopaedics should be driven by what is good for our patients, and not by the marketing and sales divisions of the orthopaedic supply companies. Products with a dubious clinical advantage are sometimes rushed to market without appropriate ethical and evidence-based investigation. These products are then often promoted by travelling salesmen masquerading as expert orthopaedic colleagues.

We as orthopaedic surgeons and clinicians need to use the many tools at our disposal to differentiate between what is actually in our patients' best interests and what may actually do harm. Peer-reviewed journals, such as the *South African Orthopaedics Journal*, are vital in disseminating good evidence-based research. Appropriate disclosure statements help to clarify perceived or actual commercial interests which investigators may have. The academics in our university departments need to take the lead in helping differentiate fact from fiction. Also useful are authoritative internet-based sites such as www.cochrane.org and www.nice.org.uk which provide balanced opinions.

We should keep this in mind when assessing new technologies. Above all we must do no harm and must insure that our patients' outcomes are improved both in the short and long term. We must remember that new is not always better, and better is often the enemy of good.

Dick van der Jagt
President: South African Orthopaedic Association

