
MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

As orthopaedic surgeons, we are taught to question. We start off by questioning our patients so that we may arrive at the correct diagnosis, enabling us to embark on an appropriate treatment plan. But the questioning should not stop there.

We need to question all aspects of patient management. We need to ensure that all our decisions are based on sound scientific principles, and not 'because that is the way we have always done things'. We need to question our teachers and our students in addition to ourselves. This process needs to be well structured. Answers need to be validated. Gut feel is not good enough. Prospective studies, with the correct ethics approval, can be conducted in most environments, and by all professionals. These trials and studies provide meaningful answers which should be able to be validated and replicated by colleagues and other investigators.

This process cannot continue in isolation. We need to establish and keep open vibrant communication channels. This allows us to pose and answer these vital questions. The answers need to be published. It is just as important to confirm long-held beliefs as it is to challenge them. But we need to let the orthopaedic community and the world at large know of our findings, and the answers to our questions. Journals such as the *South African Orthopaedic Journal* play an important role in this process. Each and everyone's contribution leads to better outcomes for our patients.

Dick van der Jagt
President: South African Orthopaedic Association

