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Renewing the *SAMJ* editorial leadership and celebrating the enduring legacy of Prof. Daniel J Ncayiyana

The primary aim of the *South African Medical Journal* (*SAMJ*) is to contribute to the advancement of contextually relevant health and medical science, principally through the publication of high-quality original research. Central to achieving this mission is the support and guidance provided by the journal's editorial leadership. Working closely with the Editor, the Editorial Board and Associate Editors play a pivotal role in shaping the strategic direction of the journal, ensuring that published content aligns with the journal's aims and scope and remains relevant, rigorous and valuable to its readership.

The Editorial Board comprises a diverse group of highly respected experts whose collective experience and scholarly standing strengthen the academic credibility of the journal. Their involvement lends authority and trust to the published content, assists in addressing complex ethical and editorial issues, and helps to safeguard the integrity of the scientific record. Associate Editors contribute specialist expertise across a range of disciplines, guiding manuscripts through the peer-review process, identifying appropriate reviewers from their professional networks, and providing additional assessments when review opinions diverge. Together, Editorial Board members and Associate Editors also serve as ambassadors for the journal, promoting its mission and strengthening its engagement with the broader scientific community. Serving the journal in this capacity is far more than a prestigious distinction. It is an opportunity to make a meaningful contribution to the advancement of medical science, shape scholarly discourse, and support the dissemination of knowledge that ultimately improves healthcare outcomes.

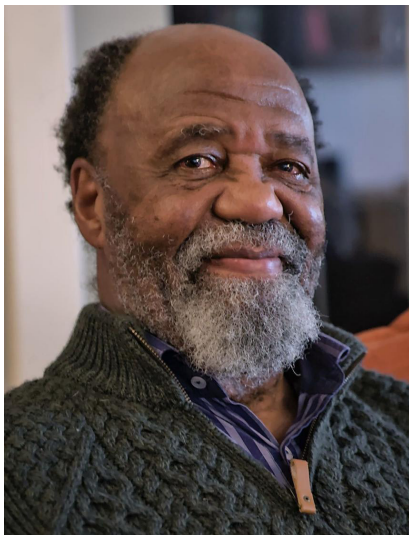
As part of its ongoing commitment to excellence in scholarly publishing, the *SAMJ* has recently undertaken a comprehensive review of the composition of its Editorial Board and Associate Editors team. In revising these structures, careful consideration was given to a range of criteria, including academic reputation and standing, breadth and diversity of expertise, professional and research experience, demonstrated peer-review and editorial skills, commitment to the journal's mission, availability to contribute meaningfully to its activities, and a proven record of ethical and professional conduct.

The revised appointments reflect a balanced mix of established and emerging leaders across a broad spectrum of disciplines, ensuring that the journal benefits from both deep experience and fresh perspectives. Through this process, the *SAMJ* seeks to further strengthen the quality, integrity and relevance of its editorial oversight while fostering an inclusive and dynamic community of scholars dedicated to advancing medical science and improving healthcare in South Africa (SA) and beyond.

Before introducing the newly appointed members of the Editorial Board and Associate Editors team, I would like to acknowledge and express profound gratitude to Prof. Daniel J Ncayiyana, whose selfless service to the journal spans several decades.

Prof. Ncayiyana was appointed Editor of the *SAMJ* in 1993 by the then Medical Association of South Africa (MASA), a year before SA's transition to democracy. Although MASA was constitutionally non-racial, it was widely perceived as representing a predominantly white medical establishment. His appointment as a black South African to lead the country's flagship medical journal therefore represented a significant and progressive departure, both symbolically and substantively. Following SA's reintegration into the international community after 1994, Prof. Ncayiyana played a central role in strengthening the global standing of the *SAMJ*. Under his leadership, the journal developed strong relationships with leading international medical publications, including the *British Medical Journal* (*BMJ*), the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (*JAMA*), and the *Lancet*. The *SAMJ* had long drawn inspiration from the *BMJ* model, and Prof. Ncayiyana further strengthened these ties through periods of observation and learning in London, regular participation in international editors' meetings and conferences, and service on numerous editorial boards.

Reflecting on the evolution of medical publishing over recent decades, Prof. Ncayiyana has highlighted the profound challenges faced by scientific journals worldwide. Foremost among these has been the rapid growth of online publishing, which transformed the dissemination of scientific knowledge and diminished the traditional gatekeeping role of established journals. At the same time, fundamental changes in pharmaceutical marketing strategies significantly reduced what had once been a dependable and lucrative source of revenue for many medical journals. Pharmaceutical advertising, which had been a major contributor to journal sustainability during the 1980s and 1990s, steadily declined as companies shifted their promotional activities to alternative platforms and approaches. Like many leading medical journals internationally, the *SAMJ* has had to navigate these challenges while maintaining its commitment to publishing high-quality, independent scientific research. At various points, these developments placed considerable pressure on the journal's financial sustainability, bringing it perilously close to the brink. Yet, through resilience, innovation, and the unwavering dedication of its editors, reviewers, authors and publishing staff, the journal has successfully adapted to a rapidly changing publishing environment while preserving its reputation as one of Africa's foremost medical journals.



Although Prof. Ncayiyana retired from the editorship in 2013 after an extraordinary 20 years at the helm, his service to the journal did not end there. He continued to make invaluable contributions as a member of the Editors' New Manuscript Preview Task

Group, which assesses newly submitted manuscripts and assists in determining which warrant full peer review and which fall outside the journal's publication criteria. After many additional years of service in this role, he has requested to step down from the group in October this year.

I continue to marvel at Prof. Ncayiyana's remarkable two decades as Editor of the *SAMJ*. When I reflect on that period, I am struck not only by the longevity of his stewardship but also by the consistently high standards, intellectual rigour and professionalism that characterised the journal under his leadership. The journal operated with remarkable efficiency while maintaining a reputation for excellence that commanded respect both nationally and internationally. His editorial vision, commitment to scholarly integrity, and dedication to advancing medical science established a legacy that continues to inspire admiration.

Those years stand as a testament to what can be achieved through principled leadership, sound judgement and an unwavering commitment to quality. His tenure set a benchmark for medical publishing in SA, and the impact of his contributions continues to be felt by authors, reviewers, editors and readers alike. It is an achievement worthy of both recognition and gratitude.

Equally appreciated are his continued contributions to the journal long after the conclusion of his formal editorial tenure. His willingness to remain engaged, to share his wisdom and experience, and to offer thoughtful counsel has been invaluable. On a personal note, I am especially grateful for his readiness to serve as a trusted sounding board. His insight, perspective and measured advice have often provided clarity and reassurance when navigating complex editorial and professional matters. His generosity with both his time and expertise reflects the collegiality, mentorship and commitment to service for which he is so highly regarded.

I am also delighted to introduce the newly constituted editorial leadership of the *SAMJ*.

Editorial Board Members

- Prof. John Pettifor
- Prof. Damian L Clarke
- Prof. Carla Kotzé
- Prof. Manie de Klerk
- Prof. Mantoa Mokhachane.

Associate Editors

- Dr Gill Boshomane
- Dr Kirusha Moodley
- Dr Eitzaz Sadiq
- Dr Logandran Naidoo
- Prof. Marc Blockman
- Prof. Freedom N Gumedze
- Prof. Jantjie Taljaard
- Prof. Christopher Szabo
- Prof. Coceka N Mnyani.

On behalf of the journal, I warmly welcome each of you to the *SAMJ* editorial family. We look forward to your contributions as we continue to strengthen the journal's role in advancing medical science, informing healthcare practice and serving the medical community in SA and beyond. Together, we will build on a proud legacy while shaping the future of scholarly publishing for the benefit of researchers, clinicians, policy-makers and patients alike.



AI contribution. AI was used to refine the language and structure of this mini-editorial.

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