

## FROM THE EDITOR



This Spring edition brings 2008 to a close. And what a year it has been. Not many breakthroughs in HIV or TB, but a lot of activity in terms of understanding early infection better, really getting to grips with early immune responses, and again thinking through our prevention options. In 2008 the concept of antiretrovirals for prevention as well as treatment has come to the fore with second-generation microbicides, pre-exposure prophylaxis and the notion that we may be able to 'treat our way out of the epidemic' becoming possibilities. Gratifyingly, this year also saw a record number of people being tested and accessing ART, and roll-out for both testing and treatment is truly scaling up.

As chairperson of the 4th Southern African HIV Conference I must encourage EVERY ONE of you to think seriously about coming to Durban on 31 March. It promises to be a critical conference where we will really formulate the key steps in getting PMTCT, treatment, testing and prevention

out there on a scale that will begin to turn the SA statistics around. (I promise that it will also be loads of fun!) Please note the early date this year: 31 March to 3 April. This is to ensure brilliant KZN weather!

In this edition, we already begin to examine some of these key scale-up questions: Jerome Singh explores the ethics and legality of traditional healers performing HIV testing (I know many have asked why this HAS to be the domain of nurses only). Francesca Esposito and her team examine changes in body composition in women taking antvirals in a KZN clinic. We look at the role of mobile phones in the HIV response with William Mapham, and Polly Clayden gives us pointers to starting infants on ART. The role of a liver biopsy in diagnosis of opportunistic infections is described by Mark Sonderup and colleagues. The vexed question of when it is deemed safe to start HAART in patients co-infected with TB is discussed by Robin Wood, and Francois Venter and colleagues give a practical view on new antiretrovirals on the horizon for South African practitioners. No guidelines in this issue, but I will whet your appetites – look out for guidelines on prevention of TB occupational exposure for HIV-infected health care workers and on the non-infertile HIV infected couple, hot stuff coming up in the new year!

Happy reading and every best wish for a restful and peaceful festive season from the whole editorial team. See you next year!

**LINDA-GAIL BEKKER**

*Editor*

## MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE

The *Journal* is starting to feel like *Men's Health*, what with posters, guidelines and now a state-of-the-art science update, *HIV Treatment Bulletin*, falling out of it. Exco is pleased to announce an important and strategic partnership with HIV i-Base, who publish *HIV Treatment Bulletin*. We are distributing the southern African version of their excellent newsletter, which will exclusively focus on the scientific reports and resources that have local relevance – with a strong focus on paediatrics and maternal health.

*HIV Treatment Bulletin* neatly complements the *Journal*, providing the snobbish clinician and scientist with the most hot-off-the-press analysis of recent clinical trials and basic science research. Policy makers can authoritatively pronounce at their guidelines meetings, clinicians can expand their patients' options, and, most importantly, you can show off at ward rounds. Thanks to all the people at i-Base, this is a major step forward for quality information sharing.

We wish the new Health Minister, Barbara Hogan, all the best. She has very small shoes to fill, but a mammoth task ahead of her to repair South Africa's woeful health service. At the



time of writing, she and her deputy, Dr Molefi Sefularo, have been very impressive, dealing with a cholera disaster, drug stock-outs, issues of prevention, releasing controversial reports that were stuck on her predecessor's desk for months, and a dozen other complex health problems.

Finally, the EXCO welcomes two new members based in Durban, Professor Yunus Moosa and Dr Henry Sunpath, both highly respected clinicians and part of the team responsible for an excellent HIV clinical conference held in October.

**FRANCOIS VENTER**

*President*