

# EDITORIAL

## African Health Sciences in Medline and “on-line full text publishing”

This August 2003 issue comes as we celebrate *African Health Sciences* being on the Medline since April 2003. It features six original articles and one special article on the participatory planning process for transforming the Faculty of Medicine at Makerere University into a College of Health Sciences.

Your contributions as authors, readers and reviewers are helping to promote this journal as an icon for the Makerere University and the Africa region. By the time you read the next issue of *African Health Sciences* we hope to have started producing an online full text publishing version of the journal. Just watch the space.

Detrimental effects of diarrhea are not only due to dehydration per se but deficiency of micronutrients such as zinc are a part of the cascade. The article by Bitarakwate and colleagues alerts us to the seriousness of zinc deficiency among children with persistent diarrhea attending Mulago hospital <sup>1</sup>. The integrated management approach to childhood diarrhea illness should consider incorporating zinc supplements within its package.

As the world scientists continue looking for a cure for HIV/AIDS, several observations on old medicines continue being made. Such interesting observations have been made by United States and Uganda scientists. Chloroquine (CQ) largely a main stay in treatment of malaria may decrease vertical transmission of HIV when given to expectant mothers. Neely and colleagues report on the effect of CQ in lowering HIV prevalence in mothers and propose a role for this affordable drug in enhancing currently used therapy <sup>2</sup>. Nonetheless, more work needs to be done with chloroquine as the current study does not come up with conclusive results.

Meat inspection for human consumption is a legal requirement in many a part of the world, but the reliability for this routine procedure to detect *T.Saginanta* cysticercosis has hitherto not been evaluated in East Africa. Wanzala and colleagues in their article alert us to a possibility of missing viable cysticerci if meat is not carefully inspected <sup>3</sup>.

Nature appears to have embedded within the herb *Nerium oleander*, a substance with similar effects as digoxin, thus perhaps explaining its use as a traditional herb in heart diseases. Adome et al report on this observation <sup>4</sup>.

Although HIV/AIDS has been long with us, there is little knowledge of eye complications of this disease in children. Details of the complications

based on a cross-sectional survey are given by Ikoona, Kalyesubula and Kawuma <sup>5</sup>. Self medication with all its woes appears predominant in Kampala according to a study carried out by Anyama and Adome in two pharmacies. The authors recommend community education to combat it <sup>6</sup>.

The special article by Dodge et al highlights the rationale for transforming the Makerere University Faculty of Medicine into a College of Health Sciences and depicts the participatory collective process <sup>7</sup>.

As the health systems in Africa struggle to scale up prevention of mother to child transmission (PMTCT) of HIV, innovative ways of reaching un-reached are still needed. An article scaling the frontiers of current practice proposes traditional birth attendants for providing of PMTCT therapy <sup>8</sup>. This should provide food for thought especially for those still stuck in the traditional western model of health care.

Michael Kawooya.

**Associate Editor**

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