

# Editor's choice

## Quality and hygiene in health service provision, water and food

Welcome to our first issue among a series of four issues, *African Health Sciences* will be publishing this year. As a result of your overwhelming support and contributions *African Health Sciences* will, from March 2005, be publishing four instead of three issues per annum. We wish to thank all our authors, readers, board members, international consultants, editors and others who have contributed to the success of our journal. May the year 2005 be a special year of exceeding quality in all that you do.

The current issue of *African Health Sciences* lays emphasis on water quality and hygiene, in addition to sexuality, reproductive health, pharmacology, surgery and others. We have lined up an exciting menu of nine original articles with a prelude editorial, on health and hygiene, by Astier M. Almedon who is an Eritrean professor of science and humanitarianism at Tufts University, Boston, USA.

We start our journey in Keren, Eritrea, where Rigbe<sup>1</sup> and Almedon et al demonstrate the value of the simple, but time proven practice of hand washing as a measure of quality of care, so effective in prevention of hospital acquired infections. Hand washing, enshrined in many cultures including old Jewish laws, and demonstrated by Hungarian Physician Ignac Fulop (1818-1865), as effective in infection prevention, is often neglected by many physicians and yet if properly and routinely practiced would prevent transmission of the majority hospital acquired infections. Next we travel to Kisenyi and Katwe, sub-urban areas of Kampala City, Uganda where, according to Haruna, Ejobi and Kabagambe<sup>2</sup>, water from some protected springs maybe unsuitable for drinking without treatment. A disturbing finding from these sprawling slums in Uganda's capital city!

Our next stop over is the Eastern Cape province, South Africa where Nancy and Shulka<sup>3</sup>, after looking into factors for motivating populations to adopt safe hygienic practices, conclude that regular water supply, provision of sanitation facilities, stake holder participation and consumer sanitation knowledge are key in motivation of community hygiene. Sasanya, Okeng and Muganwa then turn our attention to food hygiene, in particular, the quality of commercial eggs for human consumption<sup>4</sup>. They are concerned about the high risk of sulfonamide residue exposure to consumers, due to poor farming regulatory practices. Egg consumers have reason to worry if such exposure to antibiotics through farming practices are not checked.

From West Africa, Umolu<sup>5</sup>, Okoror and Orhue imply that there is a need for a proper and compulsory screening of blood donors due to high prevalence of HIV and hepatitis B surface antibodies and antigens. Still pursuing the theme of quality, Odhiambo<sup>6</sup> and Odero from Kenya remind us of lessons, concerning evaluation of district health management information systems. Timely in view of the struggling health systems in sub Saharan Africa.

Several other original articles make this issue of *African Health Sciences* a bumper collection of high quality material. In a study of sexually assaulted patients, Ononge<sup>7</sup> and others report a disturbing rate of sex abuse especially in children in Kampala and its environs. What is more disturbing is that these women and children are abused by people very well

known to them and in the home of the perpetrators. There is urgent need for action to stem this scourge that is robbing us of our children. Maud Kamatenesi<sup>8</sup> reports an interesting ethnographic study of erectile dysfunction and importance and the role of traditional herbal remedies, while Kenyan<sup>9</sup> researchers report on the role of propranolol in the reversal of left ventricular hypertrophy in hypertensive rats. Uganda dentists<sup>10</sup> share their experience of dental caries in a clinic in Mulago, Kampala, while several case reports and series on neurobrucellosis<sup>11</sup> and duodenal ulcer<sup>12</sup> complete the series. UK and Uganda researchers report on the role of clinical officers<sup>13</sup> while an Emirate gynaecologist updates us on the pharmacological management of female urinary incontinence<sup>14</sup>. Hence this is a "must read" issue.

We thank you very much for your contributions and wish you interesting and informative reading.

**Michael Kawooya**  
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