

EDITORIAL

Farewell message from the outgoing editor-in-chief of the *East and Central African Journal of Surgery*

Professor Ignatius Kakande

"When the sun is shining I can do anything; no mountain is too high, no trouble too difficult to overcome."—Wilma Rudolph

"Once we believe in ourselves, we can risk curiosity, wonder, spontaneous delight, or any experience that reveals the human spirit."—E. E. Cummings

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Time flies indeed! It has come to over 18 years since my predecessor and founding editor of the *East and Central Journal of Surgery* Professor John Jellis of Lusaka, Zambia, handed over the editorship to me.

When Professor Jellies hand-picked me for the post in 2000, before I publicly accepted, I first speculated as to why—among all surgeons in the Association of Surgeons of East Africa (ASEA)—he chose me. Perhaps the answer to this can be found in his farewell editorial of 2000 (Volume 5, Number 2), in which he wrote, “I gracefully handed over the editorship to Professor Ignatius Kakande of Kampala, a most experienced and prolific writer of scientific papers.... In the hands of Professor Kakande, I am sure that the journal will prosper and will become of recognised worth to be indexed. Perhaps electronic publishing will aid wider distribution.” With that humbling overstatement from an academic giant, I proudly took over the reins and subsequently steered the *ECAJS* as editor-in-chief for nearly 2 decades.

It’s funny to think about how sceptical I was at the beginning of my new job. When I accepted to take over the post, I had zero idea of what to expect. There were a lot of things I didn’t know, but of 3 things I was positive: I knew that I was scared stiff, that this was personally unfamiliar territory for myself, but also that I loved to write, a trait I acquired when I was a lecturer at the University of Nairobi in Kenya. I believed then that with the challenges before me as an inexperienced editor, I had no option but to humbly accept the job with a hope that if I became consistent, persistent and did it with a smile on my face, eventually I would feel the exhilaration of victory. I had come to learn to be thankful for each challenge I faced because it built my strength and character. Optimism is the ultimate definition of a leader. A leader has to look optimistically at what is ahead while not ignoring the challenges that must be overcome. I also took it as an opportunity to help up-and-coming young surgeons to support and encourage them to publish and build their CVs so as to reach the peaks of their academic careers early.

This job has taught and given me so much. It has given me the ability to stand firmly on my own words and be confident about what I have put out into the world through writing. While working as editor-in-chief has taught me the value of my own words, it has also taught me about the responsibility of someone who writes. It has been my great honour and privilege to serve you as the editor-in-chief of this journal since 2000. Despite many hardships, the *East and Central African Journal of Surgery* has experienced tremendous growth in both quantity and quality. When I took over this job over 18 years ago, the journal published hard copies twice a year, and these issues were only distributed to paid-up fellows and members of ASEA. I had to carry heaps and heaps of journals to the regional or annual general meetings of ASEA. The country representatives carried the copies to their countries. I relieved myself and the ASEA country representatives the burden of carrying the heavy load. In 2006. Bioline international started publishing our journal online. Later, African Journals OnLine (AJOL) came in for the same purpose. Currently the journal is published online 3 times a year.

During my term of editorship, I have had many challenges, some of which I had never anticipated. The biggest challenge has all along been the inadequate funding of the journal. The absence of an effective editorial board for the journal, non-existence of full-time supportive editorial staff, lack of office space, and slow responses from peer reviewers have also been factors that made the work difficult. I am happy to confirm that for the last about 1 year, the journal has now employed a highly experienced and competent assistant editor, Dr Andrew Mataya, who has done a tremendous job in improving the structure and outlook of the journal. It has been a great pleasure to work with him. Credit goes to the secretary general of COSECSA, Prof. Eric Borgstein, for identifying Andrew for the post. With the strong new editorial board now in place under my chairmanship and with the support of Andrew, the future of the journal looks even brighter, provided the journal is well funded.

It is time to step away from my life as editor-in-chief of the *East and Central African Journal of Surgery*. It gives me great pleasure to pass the torch to our acting editor-in-chief, Prof. Abebe Bekele. He is an experienced researcher and an



Some members of the newly revamped *ECAJS* editorial board at an editorial board meeting, Windhoek, Namibia, 29 to 30 March 2019

academician, and I am confident that he will provide the leadership for this journal to grow to the next level of excellence. Concurrent with my retirement, a search for a new editor-in-chief is being conducted. I invite you to become involved by bringing forth highly qualified candidates dedicated to surgical practice and research in the constituent countries of COSECSA/ASEA. The editor-in-chief should have 2 associate editors, 1 of whom should be a female surgeon.

Thank you for your trust in me, your support and your friendship. None of us achieve in isolation and the successes we've enjoyed together have been the result of our mutual cooperation and collaboration, especially with Bioline International, AJOL, and the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI)/COSECSA Collaboration Programme. It's a pleasure and a privilege to have worked alongside colleagues who understand how to bring out the best in each other. Hundreds of authors from Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas have submitted manuscripts for publication in our relatively young journal. I would like to thank those authors for their contributions over the years. I have enjoyed reading many of the articles submitted. The article peer reviewers deserve a big round of applause for the enormous time and effort they have invested in this journal, encouraging its growth and quality. I have learned a tremendous amount from you. I am proud to have helped provide this medium through which we can share our knowledge and strengthen our intellect.

I appreciate the support and encouragement I have received from various ASEA/COSECSA councils for their morale and—to a limited extent—financial support. Whenever I had problems regarding funding, I always knew I could look

to to the COSECSA offices in Arusha. For this I will ever remain grateful to Eric O'Flynn of the RCSI/COSECSA Collaboration Programme; the COSECSA CEO, Rosemary Mugwe; Judith AndrewsL and Chris Minja. To all of them I say, *ASANTE SANA*.

I would not be fair if I ended without thanking my dear wife, Bridget, and my grandchildren, whom I denied my company by spending hours and hours of my free time, weekends, and public holidays working on the journal for nearly 2 decades.

Believing that credible science information is a powerful means to improved surgical practice, I have been particularly proud to be a part of the efforts to facilitate communication of the advancement of the art and science of surgical practice and research, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, and globally as a whole. I hope that these unique efforts continue to provide a

successful model for how surgical journals can serve to inform, educate, and improve the lives of our people in Africa and around the world as a whole.

Retirement has been a discovery of beauty for me. Due to my demanding work, I never had the time before to notice the beauty of my wife, my children, and grandkids, the trees outside my very own house. And, the beauty of time itself.

Though I am tired now, after my long stay in the editorship post, I know that I will miss working alongside these wonderful people who have helped me shape the *ECAJS* into what is today.

How lucky I am to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard.

God bless you all.

Prof Ignatius Kakande

Outgoing Editor-in-Chief

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