

Rural and Remote Health a Theme for AMJ 2009

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Welcome to the AMJ 2009. Little more than five years ago few could have foreseen the historic events of January this year; the inauguration of the first African-American President, with a message of hope and change but also the dawn of a deep and damaging economic recession that lead many to question what can be done to improve the prospects of the world's six billion inhabitants in a short time frame? It is in this context that we grow the readership of the AMJ and I am delighted to report that over the past two months we have noted a marked increase visits from many countries:

Australia
India
Slovakia
United States
United Kingdom
Netherlands
Iran
Canada
Singapore
France
Japan
Saudi Arabia
Ukraine
Nepal
Israel

We are grateful to all our readers and look forward to your contributions in the coming year. Interest in the journal has been greatly boosted by our determination to focus on the needs of early and mid career researchers, including students. At the close of 2008 we established the AMJ Student Advisory Board (SAB) and to press there are 45 members from 13 countries. In 2009 we will feature articles by students dealing with many of the challenges facing the global community as articulated by the world health organisation¹:

1. Around 10 million children under the age of five die each year
2. Cardiovascular diseases are the leading causes of death in the world
3. HIV/AIDS is the leading cause of adult death in Africa
4. Population ageing is contributing to the rise in cancer and heart disease
5. Lung cancer is the most common cause of death from cancer in the world
6. Complications of pregnancy account for almost 15 % of deaths in women of reproductive age worldwide
7. Mental disorders such as depression are among the 20 leading causes of disability worldwide
8. Hearing loss, vision problems and mental disorders are the most common causes of disability
9. Road traffic injuries are projected to rise from the ninth leading cause of death globally in 2004, to the fifth in 2030
10. Under-nutrition is the underlying cause of death for at least 30% of all children under age five

With this backdrop we also plan to explore the challenges facing students yet to take their place at the coal face in their respective countries, including 16000 medical students in India alone. Students will reflect on the likely effect of the economic meltdown on their careers; the impact of the internet on doctor-patient relationships globally and the hopes and aspirations of student representative bodies in developed and developing countries. These and many other issues will be explored in 2009.

In the AMJ this month we feature a presentation by Prof Michael Dooley Professor of Clinical Pharmacy at Monash University, Australia and Director of Pharmacy, Bayside Health. As the impetus to deliver services to the patient as close to their home as possible Professor Dooley urges caution in promoting oral chemotherapies without a careful planning for monitoring toxic drugs in a community setting. Staying with the theme of rurality Sue Bates, Director of Patient Navigation, with CancerCare Manitoba, Canada reflects on her experiences as a health care policy advisor in the UK as it relates to cancer care in rural and remote Canada. Many of the issues she highlights also apply to other countries where geography hampers equity in health provision across the nation. On a different theme we publish a paper by Muller et al from Flinders University in South Australia in which the authors argue that primary health care may be greatly enhanced through a deeper understanding of the factors that surround a patient's current health status. We will build on this theme in the coming editions as we invite others to write about the role of primary health care as the first point of contact between the person who seeks expert medical advice and the health care system where he or she lives.

To begin our focus on student projects we feature a presentation by Oksana Burford, a Masters student from the school of pharmacy, Curtin University of Technology Perth, Western Australia describing preliminary findings of a study to motivate young people to quit smoking by demonstrating the impact of smoking on their facial appearance over time. This

innovative project has been in the national Australian media twice in 2008 and offers a promising new approach to an important public health issue around the world. Welcome to the AMJ 2009 and on behalf of the editorial board I wish you a peaceful and productive Year. Please do not hesitate to contact me with your suggestions and comments.

References:

1. World Health Organisation. 10 facts on the global burden of disease. Available from http://www.who.int/features/factfiles/global_burden/en/index.html



