

About this issue ...



The official policy of this journal states that it is a regional journal for southern Africa and the African continent and that it specifically seeks to act as a forum for the discussion of issues of local importance and of specific importance to the developing world. When considering important malignancies in women of Africa and southern Africa,

breast cancer and cervical cancer rank by far the highest. This second edition of the SAJGO focuses strongly on these two malignancies.

We are proud to publish the comprehensive pharmacological review of trastuzumab, the unique designer drug for HER-2 positive breast cancer. In this report Dr Kim Outhoff focuses on the cardiac side-effects and concerns and also includes clinical strategies to limit this negative consequence.

All breast cancers are definitely not equal. Using molecular, genetic and hormonal signatures, breast tumours have been re-classified and re-grouped many times. These attempts to improve stratification of tumours to correlate better with prognostic and therapeutic groups have a lot of merit. Molecular signaturing of breast cancer is indeed more advanced than in any other cancer type and often determines clinical treatment decisions. On the other hand it can be very confusing. The differences and similarities between three scarce tumour types and the clinical relevance are considered in detail by Dr Tomas Slavik.

Cancer control programmes include primary and secondary prevention, early detection and effective treatment. Some aspects of each of these interventions in response to the cervical cancer epidemic will receive attention.

In the first edition Prof Lynn Denny wrote a comprehensive overview of cervical intra-epithelial lesions detailing aetiology, classification and detection methods. In an update on the management of cervical cancer precursors in this issue, Prof Gerhard Lindeque concentrates on the different treatment options, outlining also the alternatives to the classical management options. Both these experienced authors point out that a variety of treatment options are available, suggesting that we need to be creative in seeking solutions for the developing world. Only if screening

is coupled with some therapy of detected lesions can we say that "anything is better than nothing".

Similarly Dr Hannah Simonds identifies unique southern African aspects of radiation treatment for invasive cervical cancer. She points out the differences between the local situation and the developed world. In South Africa we should take care when introducing new "state-of-the-art" technologies. The side-effect profile as well as cost-effectiveness of these treatment options needs to be considered carefully. Alternatives to the accepted management options are proposed. She challenges the appropriateness of the addition of chemotherapy to radiation protocols in patients with advanced disease.

The South African HPV Advisory Board was initiated in 2004. The Board advises clinicians, decision makers, patients and other stake holders on human papilloma virus-related disease and in particular cervical cancer. This group consists of academics, scientists and clinicians with a special interest in women's health, women's cancer and infectious diseases.

We include a summary of their policy document for the use of the newly available cervical cancer vaccines in this journal. Readers are invited to comment on this frequently updated document. We trust that this document will be of value making clinical decisions. A comprehensive national strategy and government roll-out programme is not a reality yet. In the interim it is important that the current generation of teenage girls should not be denied the opportunity to receive this highly effective prevention when and where affordable.

Some frequently asked questions about the vaccine are addressed in a separate document also by the HPV Advisory Board. We invite clinicians to freely use copies of this document as a handout to patients, parents and other interested parties.

We are privileged to have a combination of amazing clinical material and state-of-the-art diagnostic technology in the southern tip of this continent. This is demonstrated by the interesting case of unusual heterotopic pregnancy published in this issue.

Again we invite comment on any of the articles in this issue and also response to the regularly updated documents on HPV vaccines. We would like to continue publishing local interesting case reports and invite readers to submit cases for consideration.

Greta Dreyer

Editor-in-Chief