

# FROM THE EDITOR

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When I look back and take stock of what has happened over the last year the highlights include the success of the Dira Sengwe Conference in Durban; the commencement of antiretroviral therapy by Zackie Achmat and his nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize; the emergence of meaningful corporate antiretroviral rollouts; the lowering of many antiretroviral prices to not-for-profit levels, and the government's vacillation over the provision of antiretrovirals (ARVs), hastily followed by their announcement of an ARV rollout planned to begin at pilot sites early next year.

At Society level, the increase in membership and initiatives has been hard to keep pace with. From 300 members in April 2000 we have burgeoned to nearly 6 000 members, more than half of whom have successfully completed the Society/Foundation for Professional Development HIV Management Course. In addition, about two dozen people have also sat the examinations for the Colleges of Medicine's Diploma in HIV Management. The Society has employed a database manager to capture not only members' contact details, but also their continuing medical educational achievements so that maximum use can be made of the database as a referral tool and doctor network of trained and experienced practitioners. The government would be well advised to partner with the Society in its rollout and make use of the Society's trained HIV/AIDS treaters and multidisciplinary experts, some with 15 years' experience.

Access programmes have always been embraced by the Society in order to meet the organisation's core objective of providing state-of-the-art medical care to those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. Recently the Society entered into an agreement with GSK's Global Access Programme to obtain GSK antiretrovirals for members' unfunded and 'under-funded' patients whose HIV medical aid benefits are insufficient to fund 12 months of treatment. To date, approximately 200 members have registered on the programme and as a result, a significant number of patients are benefiting from far more affordable treatment. For more details about the programme, ring the Society's new Special Projects Manager, Mrs Berry Prentice, on (011) 453-5066.

I would like to take this opportunity to recognise the voluntary work undertaken by many members of the Society involved in a large variety of humanitarian organisations and programmes. They give selflessly of their time and skills in an attempt to combat the ravages of HIV/AIDS in our country. Let's hope their generous efforts will be assisted by the government's programme and planned rollout of antiretrovirals.

On a final note, I would like to wish you all a peaceful and restful holiday season.

## DES MARTIN

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