

EDITORIAL

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Does your Journal meet your requirements?

“Medical journals, which many imagine to be as dull as telephone directories and twice as obscure, influence the lives of everybody – and not always for the better” - Richard Smith.

I can confidently say that the SA Heart Journal is not as thick as the Cape Town telephone directory. As for the other parallels – you be the judge. A paper recently submitted for review by SA Heart, was accompanied by a cover letter stating: “We chose to submit this paper to your journal, the leading publication for cardiologists and cardiothoracic surgeons in South Africa, publishing clinically relevant research....” This is indeed music to the ears of the Editor. I also believe it to be an accurate statement. However, that is not the point I want to address. I want to examine your perceptions about the SA Heart Journal and how the Journal measures up to your requirements as regards the official Journal of the South African Heart Association.

For some the Journal is the instrument that must keep them up-to-date with new developments in cardiology and cardiac surgery, the Journal that continuously adds to their knowledge. For some the Journal is the instrument they can use to publish their research in a local journal of quality that is widely read. For some the Journal is the instrument that keeps them up to date with the affairs of the South African Heart Association through the newsletter it contains. To some it is the flagship of the South African Heart Association and the barometer of the value added by our Association in many spheres. Where do you stand in terms of your expectations of your Journal?

Does the Journal keep you up to date with new developments in the field of cardiology and cardiac surgery? Does publication in the Journal provide you with a publication listed by the Department of Health, providing subsidy for the academic institution you work for? Incidentally, the answer to this last question is yes! Does the Journal keep you up to date with the affairs of the South African Heart Association? Does the Journal regularly improve your ECG knowledge? Does the Journal regularly improve your echocardiography knowledge? Do you read the Journal? Do you enjoy reading the Journal? Do you read the electronic version of the Journal or do you prefer receiving the printed version (the number of printed copies distributed was recently reduced to combat the rising cost of producing the Journal). Does the Journal add value to the publication of scientific information in South Africa?

The answer to these questions cannot come from the Editor, it has to come from the readership. One weakness of our Journal is the lack of correspondence received in response to the material we publish. I challenge you to change that. Inform us regarding the strong and the weak points of the Journal. Share your views regarding the direction the Journal should take in the future. Air your likes and dislikes. Take ownership. It is your Journal.

Please spend 5 minutes filling in the included questionnaire on the SA Heart Journal and fax it to the Editor at 021 938 4410 or visit the SA Heart website www.saheart.org and fill in the questionnaire online.