

Editorial

We vividly recall on our first days as medical students being told that half of what we were about to learn in our degrees would be obsolete by the time we graduated. Such is the pace of advancement in medical knowledge and practice. A brand new edition of a medical textbook, by the time of publication, is already many months and perhaps years out of date. It is useful to reflect on these facts as we consider the place of peer-reviewed journals, such as the Southern Sudan Medical Bulletin, in our continuing professional development.

Firstly, medical therapies are constantly evolving; new drugs are being developed and existing treatments re-evaluated by the international medical community. 'Evidence based medicine' has become the cornerstone of the modern medical approach, and it's crucial to have a means of keeping abreast of the latest developments and keep our practice up to date. We owe this to our patients.

Second is the issue of applicability. It is good to read about approaches to medical management in the UK or even Northern Sudan, but the fact is our disease burden is different, our available resources are different, the cultural factors are different, and perhaps even the physiology of our population is different! This highlights the importance of having our own national journal, as the means to discuss and learn from each other about the specific needs and management issues of our population.

Thirdly, the ability to independently publish peer-reviewed studies and clinical audits is extremely important. The first step to making any real improvement in a system is the ability to take an honest look at how things are now and to publicly acknowledge the strengths and deficits. Only then can any meaningful progress be made. To bury one's head in the sand will never result in any improvement, and the published medium of scientific data is a powerful opponent to apathy and denial.

Lastly, it's important to recognise the value in building a national community of medical practitioners. We are all working towards the same goal: the healthcare of the people of Southern Sudan. This journal provides a forum for co-ordinating the discussion and dissemination of ideas, linking individuals, healthcare centres and hospitals, spanning primary and secondary care to help facilitate teamwork.

Drs James Ayrton & David Attwood

James Ayrton and David Attwood are UK doctors currently working in Juba Teaching Hospital as part of the St Mary's Juba Link - a partnership which seeks to promote continuing professional development, particularly through training in secondary medical care.

The **Southern Sudan Medical Bulletin (SSMB)** is a quarterly publication intended for Healthcare Professionals working in the Southern Sudan or those Healthcare Professionals in other parts of the world seeking information on health in the Southern Sudan.

It aims to offer education and information in all specialities and identify research that will inform the development of Health Services in the Southern Sudan. We plan to include reports of original research, critical/systematic reviews, case reports, clinical photographic materials, obituaries, letters to the Editor, use of drugs, medical news of public interest, nutrition matters, public health issues and stories of the health services in the Southern Sudan in the past.

The Bulletin is a publication of the St Mary's Juba link. It is published in mid-February, May, August and November each year and is free online at <http://www.iow.nhs.uk/juba> (under journals).

Readers are encouraged to print out copies and pass them to colleagues.

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