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## Asia Pacific Journal of Family Medicine Volume 5 Issue 3

### EDITORIAL

#### General practice research and the relevance of regional journals

As 2006 draws to a close, this is a good time to reflect on the many challenges we have all faced throughout the year. It has been a year that has seen the network of family physicians form even stronger bonds globally, as we have faced challenges from many quarters:

- both new infectious disease threats such as avian influenza,<sup>1</sup> and old ones such as the continual decimation of populations in developing countries by HIV;
- implementing and disseminating concepts of preventive medicine;
- addressing the issues of health inequalities, whether they be gender, ethnic or socio-economically based; and
- dealing with the scourge of chronic disease and comorbidity that forms the daily bulk of problems presented in GP waiting rooms around the world.

This concept of professional commonalities, irrespective of the locale of our practice, was emphasized most recently at the Asia-Pacific Wonca meeting in Bangkok. This meeting also highlighted the importance of research by our profession, in order to gain a greater understanding of our patients' needs and to encourage better directed health care and policy initiatives for individual countries within our region. In line with this, the "Research Networks within the Asia Pacific Region" seminar was well-attended and broad vision issues were discussed. The need for adequate funding and protected time to promote and support research initiatives was highlighted, and ways of doing this were debated. This focus on research closely supports the mission statement of our journal, which has always been dedicated to providing a platform for disseminating regional research and helping raise the standards within our region.

As the Journal enters its 6th year of publication we, the editors, continue to search for the most effective and efficient way for the journal to meet your needs. As most of you will be aware, changes to publishing have been fast and furious over the last 5 years, with electronic publishing being a standard way of disseminating information.<sup>2,3</sup> However, this has to be consistent with maintaining publishing standards, something to which we at *Asia Pacific Family Medicine (APFM)* have always been committed. Our survival over the past 5 years has been challenging, but the need for a journal such as ours has never been greater. In a searching article dealing with the reality of an ongoing place for local journals in an environment of international competition,<sup>4</sup> Ofori-Adjei argues that "the time has come to recognize local journals as a resource for health." While internationally recognized "quality" criteria in publishing mean that many authors seek publication in the larger

international journals, this underestimates the question of readership. Topics of pressing need and interest locally may have little importance or relevance on a world-wide scale. Does this mean the topic is not suitable for general debate or in need of dissemination? Not at all. It means that the audience needs to be carefully selected, and this is what smaller, more targeted journals specialize in. For this reason, we believe that the *APFM* journal has an essential part to play in the discipline of family medicine in this region. Its place on the library shelf is beside local, national journals, to provide a repository of locally relevant research that supplements each local national journal's impressions and discussions of their national policies and interests.

In 2007, revisions to our publishing process will see the journal being delivered to you, the reader, in a more timely fashion with reflections on the issues and research of regional importance. We welcome articles from all authors on the diversity of topics and interests that fall under the umbrella of general practice/family medicine, but we are particularly seeking papers that address four key topics of relevance for our region: avian influenza pandemic planning; mental health; diabetes; and medical education. We particularly welcome new or aspiring authors to join the research debate.

Finally we, the editors, would also like to extend our gratitude to the editorial board and all the reviewers who have worked so hard behind the scenes over the previous year to keep the journal ongoing. In addition, we also want to express our thanks to the editorial team of Rod, Alex and Emilin, without whom it would be impossible to have a journal at all. So from all of us, we thank you for your support over the last few years and look forward to further exploration with you in the exciting world of general practice in 2007.

Lyn CLEARIHAN,  
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Zorayda LEOPANDO

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- 3 Delamothe T. *Is that it? How online articles have changed over the past five years. BMJ 2002; 325: 1475–8.*
- 4 Ofori-Adjei D, Antes G, Tharyan P, Slade E, Tamber PS. *Have online International journal made local journals obsolete? PLoS Med 2006; 3: e359.*

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