

## **Editorial**

The Southern Sudan Medical Bulletin (SSMB) was founded to fill in a void in medical, nursing, pharmacy, laboratory and therapy information to Southern Sudanese Healthcare professionals on the state of health in Southern Sudan. It is also aimed at identifying issues that may be addressed to improve health provision in the Southern Sudan. SSMB is a multidisciplinary publication available free online and to a limited number of colleagues working in rural areas of the Southern Sudan without Internet connection as print copies.

Whilst the Government of Southern Sudan grapples with the issues of developing the infrastructure of health services in the Southern Sudan, it is my sincere hope that this publication will provide Healthcare Professionals with evidence-based information on the management of the common illnesses which continue to afflict the people of the Southern Sudan. During the twenty-three year old war (1982 – 2005) it has been observed that the incidence and prevalence of the traditional tropical diseases (*schistosomiasis, leishmaniasis, malaria, guinea worm infestation, trachoma, trypanosomiasis, leprosy, onchocerciasis and tuberculosis*) has increased in the Southern Sudan compared to the neighbouring countries where these have either been largely contained or eliminated. This publication will report on the incidence and prevalence of these conditions and hopefully attract research interest and funding to contain them. The prevalence of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and the acquired immunodeficiency disease syndrome (AIDS) has not been determined clearly in the Southern Sudan. During the war many populations were shielded from each other by pockets of armed engagement between the Sudan People's Liberation Army and the Soldiers of the Sudan Government and as such one can assume that the transmission of the HIV/AIDS was low. However with the advent of peace in the Southern Sudan since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement on the 9 January 2005, free movement between the East African countries of Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania and the Democratic Republic of the Congo might have changed the epidemiology of HIV/AIDS. SSMB hopes to publish any sero epidemiological studies on the prevalence of HIV in the Southern Sudan so that preventive measures may be instituted very soon.

As in any post conflict situation, young men in their prime who have worked as Soldiers emerge from the war with disabilities such as limb amputations, impaired vision or hearing and the sequelae of traumatic brain injury. Some continue to be troubled by post traumatic stress syndrome and issues of body image due to missing limbs. Though none of these conditions have known cures, the offer of organised rehabilitation by trained Specialists in this field will ensure the appropriate prescription of limb prosthesis (artificial limbs), psychological interventions for those suffering from head injuries, the provision of wheelchairs and vocational rehabilitation to ensure that disabled persons find gainful employment. Research into the level of disability in the Southern Sudan needs to be carried out to ensure that help is targeted at those affected. Training of Healthcare Professionals will be determined by the level of need resulting from any cross-sectional studies to determine the prevalence of disability in the Southern Sudan community. Organisations specialising in Rehabilitation may wish to undertake projects of this nature once they understand the scale of the problem.

Maternal and infant mortality continue to cause concern in Southern Sudan. The figures are high according to current estimates but a systematic collation of data by county or payam (a payam is a collection of 3 – 5 villages) needs to be carried out urgently in order to inform preventive measures.

SSMB will carry Continuing Professional Development (CPD) pages to offer ongoing updates in various ways of prevention and treatment of common conditions. This will ensure that colleagues working in the rural areas without access to current journals, either in print form or via the Internet update their knowledge and skills through articles aimed at honing basic clinical skills. Hence, SSMB will publish case histories, summaries of published Articles in peer reviewed journals which bear relevance to health in a tropical environment, informative clinical photographic materials, quizzes with answers and review articles on a range of subjects such as clinical therapeutics, patho-physiology of disease, complications, treatment and research methodology.

Articles will be welcome from all Healthcare Professionals working in the Southern Sudan or those working abroad who wish to know more about the health circumstances in the Southern Sudan.

I am responsible for the selection of the current editorial board simply because I have been in correspondence with almost all those who are on the Board. This is a provisional Editorial Board whose composition will change as the Bulletin evolves. The aim is to have twelve to fifteen members of the Editorial Board from both the Southern Sudan and the Diaspora. There are currently six unfilled vacancies which should be filled by three Healthcare Professionals from each of Baher-El-Ghazel and Upper Nile regions. We need some female professionals on board and hope that some of the six will be women professionals from medicine, nursing, pharmacy or laboratory technology.

The survival of the Journal will depend on contribution of articles from all those with interest in Health in the Southern Sudan. Please print off paper copies and disseminate them to Healthcare workers in the Southern Sudan.

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