

EDITORIAL

The new year, 2025, has arrived and is well under way. The headwinds thus far this year have turned into a Category 5 hurricane with many issues converging upon the country and healthcare. The new United States of America administration's decision to cut funding for PEPFAR and other USAID-administered programmes cuts deep. Our country's ability to sustain our growing HIV/AIDS programme is now under much added strain. Compounding this are the continued pursuance of an NHI policy by government in the absence of any semblance of rational thought or reality checks. These reality checks, amongst several, include the inability to be able to offer posts to all interns and community service medical officers in the Republic, not to mention that medical officer and registrar posts are in very short supply. We have unemployed doctors in a country desperately in need of human resources in healthcare. To this end, SAGES has aligned itself with the Universal Health Access Coalition (UHAC). In this edition of the Journal, the recent UHAC position is included as well as media statements. We encourage members to keep track of activities – it provides a lucid platform to rationally critique the insanity masquerading as policy and regulations being issued by the Health Department.

Primary biliary cholangitis (PBC) has, after several decades, added some promising new therapies to its management armamentarium. These are covered in a concise review by Gatley and colleagues. Simon Veenstra and colleagues remind us of the consequences of delayed achalasia diagnosis in an elegant case report. Moodley and colleagues, in a brief review, prompt us to think of the entity of "macro-AST" as a cause of elevated AST in patients – an infrequent but fascinating phenomenon.

In the Journal, we publish two studies from colleagues in Cotonou, Benin. One looking at their experience and outcomes

of upper GI haemorrhage as well as a review of a single centre experience with HCC. It is important for us to gauge the experiences of colleagues elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa as it provides vital perspective on our own practice in South Africa. Given that treatment is now available and that many have asked, we have added a puntate approach to diagnosing and managing Hepatitis C infection. Full treatment guidance will follow later.

We remind all of the 2025 SAGES meeting, taking place in Durban from July 31st to August 3rd, earlier than usual this year. Heading to KwaZulu-Natal in the heart of Winter is a comforting prospect to look forward to. We are honoured to have the well-known and highly respected Nicholas Talley at the meeting. I encourage all to attend this standalone SAGES meeting.

It is with great sadness that the Journal has an obituary to the late luminary of South African Gastroenterology, Professor Issy Segal who passed in April 2024. His contribution as highlighted in his obituary, stands as a testament to the person. Equally saddened are we in marking the recent death of a doyen of South African Gastroenterology, Professor Keith Newton. An extensive obituary will follow in the next edition of the Journal. Keith's absence at SAGES will be felt deeply.

I welcome Dr Neo Seabi to the editorship of our Journal. Neo replaces Professor Adam Mohamed. Welcome Neo and we look forward to your enlightened tenure – while we thank Adam for his extensive contribution.

I wish all well for 2025 and may common sense prevail.

Mark Sonderup

Editor: SA Journal of Gastroenterology and Hepatology

INTRODUCING A NEW SAJGH EDITOR

Dr Manoko Neo Seabi

MBChB, FCP(SA), MMED(Int Med), Cert Gastro (SA)

Dr Seabi is a specialist physician and gastroenterologist. She qualified as a gastroenterologist in 2008 and has worked both locally and in the UK. She is the clinical and academic head of gastroenterology at Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital and University of the Witwatersrand. She is currently treasurer on SAGES Council. She practices general gastroenterology, endoscopy and hepatology. Her areas of interest are in inflammatory bowel disease, oesophageal motility disorders and advanced endoscopy.

