

# EDITORIAL

With this edition, SAGES is launching its new flagship publication, the South African Journal of Gastroenterology and Hepatology (SAJGH). For reasons explained to SAGES members, we have abandoned the SA Gastroenterology Review (fondly called the 'Red Journal'). SAGES tried to retain ownership of the 'Red Journal'. It was neither sensible nor feasible to pursue this, as unfortunate as the situation was. It is said the only permanent thing in life is change, and change has arrived, and we happily present the new Journal of SAGES, the SAJGH.



Change seems to be a theme of our inaugural edition as Professor Wendy Spearman has summarised the important changes in the new WHO Hepatitis B guidance released in late March 2024. The guidance aimed at low- to middle-income countries has ushered in a sea of change in management approach. Hepatitis B management, previously posited as somewhat complex, has been simplified and now creates the very real opportunity to allow for patients to be screened, assessed, and managed at a primary level. Given the recent alarming statistics for global hepatitis B prevalence and with Africa now an epicentre, this new guidance goes a long way of demystifying hepatitis B management. SAGES congratulates Professor Spearman also in her instrumental role in co-chairing the guideline development committee for the WHO in this matter.

Two stimulating and comprehensive case reports, both first authored by Fellows, look at foregut Crohn's, a complex management issue and the rare interplay between porphyria

and systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE). Both patients highlight important aspects of the clinical management of these patient.

Two perspectives, one from IBD Africa and the Autoimmune Alliance (Dr David Epstein and Ms Catherine McCormack) and another from Discovery Health, raises opinions on the funding of biologic therapies for IBD in South Africa. These debates and discussion are crucial as demands on the funding of costly therapies grow, and the need for our patients to access these treatments increase. Trying to find solutions are always in the best interest of patients, whom of course our ultimate focus is. The issues are no different in the public sector as the realities of a stagnant economy and spiralling government debt has started biting deep into the public fiscus. Problems kept unsolved, invite more problems. Hence finding solutions to our challenges is crucial.

Finally, our annual SAGES meeting is upon us. This year things are much different. The SAGES meeting is earlier and now nested within the International Hepato-Pancreatico-Biliary Association meeting (the IHPBA), the first time this prestigious international meeting is being held on the African continent. In addition, running concurrently is another first, the African Viral Hepatitis Convention. This meeting aims to galvanise the focus on the elimination of viral hepatitis in Africa, an achievable goal, and the single factor responsible for most hepatocellular cancer and liver disease in Africa.

Thank you to all involved in getting our SAJGH off the ground. We look forward to many more successful editions.

**Mark Sonderup** 

*Editor: South African Journal of Gastroenterology and Hepatology*

## IMPORTANT DATES:



**SAGES**  
South African  
Gastroenterology Society

### SAGES Annual General Meeting

Friday 17 May 2024 at 14:20  
CTICC 1, Roof Terrace