

A new journal with much work to do

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My association with the *Journal of Public Health in Africa* (JPHiA) has been as brief as the journal is young. I have had the privilege of seeing this journal grow from being just a twinkle in the eye of one of its founding editors. I am glad that a young researcher from Africa has had the courage to start the journal. Africa generally has a very young demographic profile, and the future of the continent lies in the hands of its youth. Understanding this aspect of the large-scale context of public health is of course one way that countries, institutions, individual researchers, and publishers can see where their priorities lie, for public health in the near-to-long term future. There is also value in looking at public health from the ground up, from the perspective of individuals who have experienced good health or poor health, in youth and in old age, and under diverse social and environmental conditions. There is a general need for African perspectives in the world discourse on public health.

This journal will be a meeting place for African researchers from across the continent, and for those who have migrated beyond to pursue careers in medicine and health, or in other disciplines. The journal will also be place where anyone with relevant experience is welcome to communicate their experience and knowledge of public health and related areas. The value of perspectives permitted by more personal distance, or more theoretical understanding, must not be undervalued, even as we value the ground level experiences of medical experts in Africa. In this issue, we may have a very significant example of this in the article by Howe and Storms (How the circumcision solution in Africa will increase HIV infections. *Journal of Public Health in Africa* 2011;2:e4). This article should be read not just because of the importance of its subject, but also as a lesson in how to construct a critical review of research methods, findings, arguments, and conclusions.

The future of our journal will depend on our ability - as founding editors - to build an interested and interesting network of contributors, editors, reviewers, and readers. At this early stage, the feedback from authors and readers is extremely important. Already I sense that the journal will succeed in bringing more attention to public health, and more debate to the subject. As the paper by Mahmoud *et al.*

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(Perceptions of Nigerian medical specialists on research. *Journal of Public Health in Africa* 2011;2:e1) indicates, there is a need to provide medical experts in Africa more training and opportunities to participate in research activities, publish their research, and assess the practical value of research findings. The *Journal of Public Health in Africa* has the potential to assist in each of these areas of concern.

I strongly encourage all readers to read between the lines of what is presented here, and to consider what the authors and journal editors are trying to achieve in this collection of papers, and with this journal. There is more to a journal than meets the eye.