



# From the Editor . . .



**Gill Nelson,  
Editor-in-chief**

Welcome to this Special Issue of *Occupational Health Southern Africa* which includes a Festschrift in honour of Professor Emeritus David Rees. David Rees has been a loyal supporter of the Journal, and has published 27 papers in 26 issues since its inception in 1995. His contribution to occupational health over the last three and a half decades is reflected in the tributes submitted by those whose lives he has touched, not only professionally but also

personally. Some of the words commonly and accurately used to describe David in this Festschrift are inspiring, intelligent, knowledgeable, humble, honest, kind, quiet and funny. Essentially, he's a great person! Some of you will recognise yourselves in one or more of the many photographs that were taken in the 1980s and 1990s, and more recently. I hope that you enjoy the compilation.

*Festschrift: a book honouring a respected person, especially an academic, and presented during his or her lifetime*

It would be unusual for a current issue of any health or medical journal not to include something about COVID-19. The research opportunities seem endless. You can read two COVID-19-related articles in this issue – one that describes the development of a screening tool, written primarily by researchers from the University of Pretoria, and the other about COVID-19 statistics in the mining industry, from the Minerals Council South Africa. It is fortuitous that David Rees has worked closely with authors of both these papers, but not surprising as he has worked with almost everyone in South Africa who has an interest in occupational health, particularly in occupational respiratory medicine – researcher, health professional or student.

The third paper comes from an unusual source – the Wits School of Business Sciences – but tackles a very important issue: that of

compensation for occupational disease. Mushai and Crossley suggest that South Africa's penchant for using trusts to recompense diseased workers, or to supplement existing legislative mechanisms, may have several limitations. In the last two decades, four large trusts have been set up to compensate victims of asbestos-related diseases (from both occupational and environmental exposure), and silicosis and tuberculosis in mine workers. Trusts are widely considered, in South Africa, to be the potential answer to the lack of reform of the Occupational Diseases in Mines and Works Act (ODMWA), a topic that David Rees, together with Rodney Ehrlich, wrote about in 2015<sup>1</sup> – a paper that, together with the literature that is referenced, is a 'must read' for anyone interested in compensation for mine workers in South Africa. I would be interested to receive comments from others on the deliberation of trusts versus current legislation, so please write an opinion piece or a letter to the editor, sharing your views.

A successful scientific writing workshop was held in September, and I am pleased to see that some of you have signed up for the next one in November. For those of you who wish to participate, the application forms are available through your Societies. Alternatively, you can contact me directly at [gill.nelson@wits.ac.za](mailto:gill.nelson@wits.ac.za) for more information.

On a final note, we wish Prof. Daan Kocks, president of SASOM and *Occupational Health Southern Africa* editorial board member, a speedy recovery – he has been seriously ill with COVID-19 for several weeks. Prof. Kocks' wisdom, experience and support is highly valued by the *Occupational Health Southern Africa* team. He has been actively and positively involved with the Journal since 1997, and is a constant source of encouragement. Get well soon, Daan!

## REFERENCES

1. Ehrlich R, Rees D. Reforming miners' lung disease compensation in South Africa – long overdue but what are the options? *New Solut.* 2016; 25(4):451-468. DOI: 10.1177/1048291115610434.



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