

Editorial Comment

Greetings and welcome

Greetings to all members of the editorial team, including the members of the editorial board and the reviewers. We would also like to greet and welcome all our contributors to our publication, Curationis.

WE hope that this year will be a fruitful one for all of us and that we will work hard to ensure that we achieve that which we have set out for ourselves.

I am aware it sounds strange to be speaking like this as if the year is just beginning, but that's because this is our first edition this year. The first edition of Curationis was unable to come out in February this year, as it should have, because we did not have enough articles to publish.

Those articles that we had sent out to be reviewed, were not returned on time. Where the article had been returned, some authors took longer to make the necessary corrections recommended and return the article. But these were articles from last year. This year started with very people submitting their articles for publication, with the result that, it has taken this long to come up with this first edition.

While the delays in returning articles from reviewers is understandable because of their busy schedules, this obviously causes a lot of stress and unhappiness to many people. We are therefore urging our contributors and reviewers to be aware of these problems and want to encourage them to minimize them.

Editors Conference

The International Academy of Nursing Editors (INANE) is calling for papers to be submitted for the INANE 2003 WHICH TAKES PLACE AT THE Sun City Conference Centre, Pilanesburg, South Africa from 14, 15 & 16 August 2003. The conference, which takes place under the theme: 'Out of Africa into Cyberspace,' is open to Editors, Editorial Boards members and Review Panel and any other interested individuals. Its aims are to share experience, knowledge, skills and expertise-also to highlight new developments, encourage debate around contentious or sensitive areas-and to promote international networking.

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Losing our humanity

In November last year I attended a funeral in Edendale, a township just outside Pietermaritzburg in KwaZulu-Natal. The deceased, a young man in his thirties, had died from natural causes, according to his death certificate. However, throughout his short period of illness, the rumours were rife that he was HIV positive. When the rumours reached the ears of the family members and relatives, everybody was understandably distressed. By everybody here we mean his mother with whom he was still staying with. Although this is not his real name, let's call him Sosha. She had single-handedly raised Sosha and his older brother, whose name we shall keep out of this story for obvious reasons.

But we shall mention here that Sosha's brother died from the line of fire at the height of the violent confrontation between communities and apartheid forces. There is also his aunt, who we were told at the church service, was the deceased confidante. The young man had had a fiancée, who was also the mother of his two children. The wedding was to take place before the end of 2003.

We were also made that the deceased had started a football club in the area, to get the young boys of the street where they were subjected to all kinds of temptations. At the service, this team was present, wearing their jerseys and boots.

Community leaders, including some from the government who knew him, called him a young man of incredible talent and leadership quality who was clearly destined for greater things. They pointed out that the young man had played an important role in helping to bring about peace in the area when in-fighting between local gangs threatened to cause havoc in the community.

There was much more about Sosha which came speaker after speaker told us about Sosha, including the fact that he was doing he was half way to completing his degree with a leading university. But all of this came out later, after the family, in responds to the rumours, had produced a death certificate and read it right there during the church service, to prove that Sosha did not die from HIV/AIDS. All of us could just tell how much strain the stories about HIV/AIDS had caused this family.

In its latest publication which has been released to coincide with the International Nurses Day, the International Council of Nurses (ICN) has focused on the issue of AIDS stigma.

Titled, 'Nurses-fighting AIDS Stigma-caring for all' it quotes from a speech that was delivered by former President Nelson Mandela at the Barcelona AIDS Conference on 15 July 2002, when she said: "Many people suffering from AIDS and not killed by the diseases itself are killed by the stigma surrounding everybody who has HIV/AIDS."

Clearly, with these words, the ICN is urging all of us to be always aware of the negative role the stigma in the treatment of people infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. It says that stigma leads to discrimination and that the two fuel the HIV/AIDS epidemic by creating a culture of secrecy, silence, ignorance, blame, shame and victimization.

"This causes increased pain and suffering and devastating social and economic consequences for the people living with HIV/AIDS (PLHA), their families and communities," said the ICN.

In the case of Sosha and his family, this much was evident. Whether or not the deceased had died of HIV/AIDS, he and his family deserved to be treated with respect and dignity. While lay people have the excuse of ignorance as their defense for their prejudice, what's the excuse for the professional?

By Bhungani ka Mzolo
Editor