

Guest editorial

Anaemia

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This edition of *CME* is dedicated to anaemia. Anaemia, in particular iron deficiency anaemia, is the third most common disease in the world. It is a major cause of morbidity, especially among women in the Third World. It is probably the prime reason for female subjugation in those areas. Karen Gunther's article elucidates how to approach, assess and manage iron deficiency anaemia in adults. The majority of adults with non-gynaecological iron deficiency anaemia are often referred to a gastroenterologist. Peter Barrow's article offers insight by a stepwise approach on how gastroenterologists assess and manage iron deficiency anaemia. Deborah Jacobson offers a practical approach to managing the problem in children from a dietician's perspective.

Anaemia of chronic disorders, while not as prevalent as iron deficiency, is a common problem encountered by clinicians at some stage. Geoff Bihl, a nephrologist, offers an easy-to-follow system on how to diagnose and treat this condition.

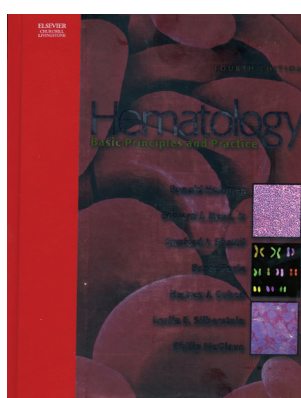
There remains a fear as to the safety of blood in South Africa, particularly after the government's interference with donation

policies. The South African Blood Transfusion Service has undertaken a new programme, and the article by Sam Gulube goes some way to reassuring clinicians that appropriate measures have been put in place to ensure that our blood is safe.

Alternatives to blood transfusions have always been an exciting possibility but many previous attempts to use alternative agents have failed – presumably due to the fact that there are no examples of unencapsulated haemoglobin in biology. Lewis Levien's article shows that Hemopure remains a promising agent although currently it appears to be an 'oxygen bridge'.

From a practical point of view re-using blood through cell salvage systems is widely utilised. (Surgeons should also be vigilant in preventing excessive blood loss.) J G Oosthuysen's article describes a real-world approach to maximising these techniques.

On a personal note, I hope you the readers will gain as much from this edition as I did when editing it.



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