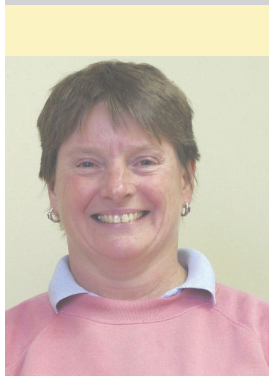


EDITOR'S COMMENT

Matters of the heart



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The first issue of 2004 is on one of the most pressing problems of the developed and emerging world, cardiovascular disease. The recent SA Heart 2003 Conference in Cape Town showed just how much interest there is in the topic. Not only was it well attended by delegates, but the industry were there in force. And the level of investment in these diseases of lifestyle was apparent in the no-expense-spared appearance of the industry contributions — quite a contrast from the AIDS conference in Durban in 2003!

Cardiovascular disease is something which will present in every medical practitioner's rooms every day of the year, and often at night too! The increasing incidence of the metabolic syndrome with its deadly combination of atherosclerosis, insulin resistance, dyslipidaemia and hypertension will make sure that this continues to happen — at great cost in premature morbidity and mortality across the societies most affected. The issues raised at the conference, which concentrated on heart failure, are pertinent to all of us involved in medicine, whether clinical or otherwise.

Cardiovascular disease is largely a disease of lifestyle. While there are many effective medications and surgical interventions which can alleviate and treat the range of conditions which fall under this label, it must be true to say that we all have a part to play in preventing the development of the diseases in the first place, and in those who already have damaged vascular systems, in preventing further progression where possible. The one aspect of cardiovascular disease which, I felt, was neglected at the recent congress, was lifestyle modification. Since we know that there are definite cardiac risk factors associated with particular lifestyles, paying attention to this ourselves, by example in our daily lives and by sensitive counselling of our patients, is vital. The general appearance of most of the delegates at the conference suggested to me that cardiologists at least, try to lead by example!

On a different note. CME turns 21 this year, and to celebrate we have a brand new appearance and a fresh approach. While we will continue to give you the benefit of interesting, relevant and up-to-date information on specific topics each month, we hope to offer something different as well. While continuing medical education is more than necessary, reading CME should also be something you enjoy doing for its own sake. I hope that you find the increased range of content and the slightly different slant of some of the articles and snippets interesting and enjoyable. My contact details are available with the credits — home as well as the SAMA offices, since I often refuse to leave my view of Chapman's Peak! Please let me know what you think.