



From the Editor . . .



**Linda Grainger,
Editor**

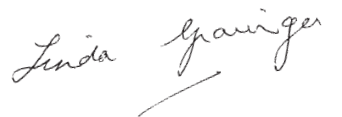
Healthcare workers are a group which is especially at risk of contracting occupationally-related infections. A significant cause of such infections arises from needlestick injuries, and nurses are particularly affected. A great concern, internationally, is that many of these injuries are unreported and it is difficult to accurately determine their incidence. Consequently, Kruger, Jimoh and Joubert's study conducted on nurses working in a regional hospital is useful and relevant. Their findings confirm the problem of under-reporting, and a lack of knowledge on protective measures. It also highlights the need for healthcare institutions to mount effective needlestick injury prevention programmes, including the creation of an environment which encourages reporting. Various resources for use in such programmes exist. For example, in 2005, the World Health Organization produced an excellent set of materials to facilitate the prevention of these injuries, entitled *Protecting healthcare workers: Preventing needlestick injuries toolkit*, and available at http://www.who.int/occupational_health/activities/pnitoolkit/en/index.html.

An important component in the prevention of occupational injuries and diseases is the education of workers regarding hazards and preventive measures. However, this can be more challenging for workers who have had little formal education, and are consequently more vulnerable. Tuchten and Nkomo present a *Back to basics* paper which questions the role of adult basic education and training (ABET) as a primary driver of mine OHS, with specific reference to elementary workers, machinery operators and drivers. It seems that despite the recognition of the need for ABET in the context of mine safety, efforts are inadequate. They argue the need for better

provision OHS and other training for mineworkers.

Moving away from risks related to mining, our attention in the third article in this issue is focused on silicosis and the exposure to respirable crystalline silica in non-mining industries. Recognising the burden of silicosis in South Africa, the Department of Labour introduced the National Programme for the Elimination of Silicosis in 2004. An aspect of the programme was the commissioning of a research project to establish the extent of workers' exposure to silica dust in non-mining. Khoza, Grové and Schutte present the results of phase two of the project which aimed to quantify the workers' exposure levels to silica dust in six types of industries. Although this was an exploratory study, it yielded sufficient evidence to demonstrate the need for further and wider studies, as well as the improvement of preventive measures.

Since our last issue, the International Commission on Occupational Health (ICOH) held its 30th International Congress on Occupational Health in Cancún, Mexico, from the 18th to the 23rd of March 2012. Many of our members were privileged to attend and a good number presented papers and posters. We are pleased to feature comprehensive reports on the event from Claudina Nogueira and Louwna Pretorius (see pages 27 and 30) and urge you to read these. We are also very proud of Claudina Nogueira and Mary Ross, who were both elected as ICOH Board Members (Mary's second term), and Louwna who was elected for a second term as Chair of the Scientific Committee on Occupational Health Nursing. Visit the ICOH website <http://www.icohweb.org/> to read the ICOH Cancún Charter on Occupation Health for All, which was produced as an outcome of the congress. It is an excellent document and we would do well to measure our efforts against it.



Call for papers for 2012

We are particularly keen to publish papers that present effective interventions relating to the disciplines of occupational hygiene, medicine and nursing. In addition to publishing papers on any relevant topic, we have planned a subtheme for the November/December 2012 issue.

We therefore invite you to submit original research, review, case study, or back to basics papers for consideration for publication in this issue. The authors' guidelines are available

on the website, www.occhealth.co.za. Please ensure that we receive your submissions no later than the dates indicated alongside the topic. All papers are peer-reviewed before publication. Should you be interested in submitting a paper, please indicate this by e-mailing the Editor at occhealthsa@technews.co.za. Please provide some basic details about what you envisage would be included in the paper.

Issue	Theme	Submission date
November/December 2012	Chronic diseases and occupational health	13 September 2012