



From the Editor . . .



**Linda Grainger,
Editor**

In this issue, we feature the subtheme of Reproduction and occupational health in addition to two articles on unrelated topics. With regard to the former, Zungu presents the findings of her study into the occupational health and safety challenges faced by women working in two mines. The study, which was funded by Mine Health and Safety Council of South Africa, is important because despite the growing number of women entering this male-dominated sector, there is a lack of studies on their unique health and safety needs. Apart from the inadequately fitting personal protective equipment and the related risks, the lack of hygiene facilities underground posed risks to these women which could affect reproductive health.

Establishing the fitness to work in the mining setting poses complex challenges. Kielblock provides a critical perspective on the adequacy of existing legislation, the derivation and application of assessments of 'fitness for work', and on international trends and precedent. Approaches currently in wide use are described and recommendations for future actions are made.

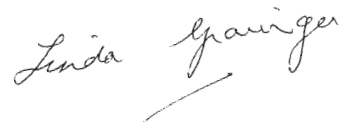
Nurses with a specialisation in occupational health are essential for the provision of high quality occupational health services. Yet, many nurses have been unable to obtain the qualification owing to factors such as the distance of educational institutions and the need to take time off work.

Orton and Noakes describe the successful use of a blended learning strategy to address some of these challenges. It is an interesting case study which indicates the trends in post-graduate education which are increasingly being employed here and internationally.

Himalowa and Frantz present the results of their study on the prevalence and effect of occupationally-related low back pain on the functional activities of workers in a construction company in Cape Town. The study is useful as it highlights the impact of low back pain and contributes to our knowledge of low back pain in workers.

On the news front, we are delighted to announce the appointment of two new editors for the journal – Gill Nelson (MMPA) and Andrew Swanepoel (SAIOH). In March I relocated to the UK, so that I could be closer to my children. This prompted the search for a replacement, and I have been mentoring Gill and Andrew over the past few months. They are both busy academics, so will share the workload of the editorship. Their biosketches (page 5) demonstrate their knowledge and experience in occupational health and hygiene, and the journal is sure to benefit from this.

Over the past years, the Fogarty Programme has been featured in this journal. So it is with pleasure that we provide a report from Mohamed and Rajen on its recent achievements (see below). It has made a significant contribution to the education of occupational health and hygiene professionals throughout southern Africa, and we congratulate the team in general, and Tom, Mohamed and Rajen in particular.



CONGRATULATIONS TO THE UM MILLENNIUM PROMISE GRANT MANAGEMENT

The year 2012 marks a historic milestone for Fogarty International sponsored Southern Africa Programmes that have been running for the past 16 years. The Millennium Promise Programme, which provides research and training in chronic non-communicable occupational and environmental respiratory diseases for five southern African countries, saw 10 PhD students and 8 mid-level academics from the region travel to the University of Michigan (USA) for a four-month intensive training in research. The students are from five SADC countries, namely South Africa, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. All the students are registered for their PhDs in participating South African universities: Universities of KwaZulu-Natal, Cape Town, Witwatersrand and Stellenbosch. In addition, eight mid-level academics from these same countries are undergoing a parallel mentorship development programme over a four-month period to enhance their research supervision skills. This programme was conceived and is being



Southern African PhD students and mid-level academics in Michigan

managed by Prof. Mohamed Jeebhay (UCT), Prof. Rajen Naidoo (UKZN), Prof. Elvis Irusen (Stellenbosch) and Prof. Tom Robins (Univ. of Michigan).