



**Gill Nelson,
Editor**

From the Editor . . .

The research papers in this issue deal with injuries in a welding company, and noise in a steel company. Work-related injuries remain a problem and we hope to be able to report some trends over time in the near future,

from the Rand Mutual Assurance Ltd. Compensation for occupational injuries is covered by the Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act of 1993. However, there are many problems with the administration and other aspects of this Act, and the Occupational Diseases in Mines and Works Act of 1973. We hope to address some of these issues in the Journal early next year, as we have a few relevant papers in the pipeline.

Both injuries and noise-induced hearing loss remain two of the priority areas for the Mine Health and Safety Council, as seen in the updated health and safety milestones that were published in the May/June 2015 issue of the Journal, courtesy of the MMPA. Encouragingly, this steel company appears to be addressing the problem of noise. However, the report that fitting of hearing protection devices is a problem echoes previous findings by Mizan et al. published in this journal last year, from an audit of noise exposure levels and hearing conservation practices in eight major iron and steel companies.¹ We all know that personal protective equipment (PPE) is the last choice for preventing exposure to occupational hazards, and that control of exposure at source should be prioritised. However, PPE of all types continues to be used and it is essential that workers are trained correctly on the use of PPE, and are supplied with devices that fit properly.

We have several opinion pieces in this issue of the Journal, which are always welcome. They deal with very different issues: legislation and liability with regard to water quality, and the future of the National Institute for Occupational Health. The quality of our water is regularly a news item in the media. Encouragingly, Afriforum reported earlier this year that the quality of water in South Africa has improved since last year.² We await the legislation for the National Public Health Institutes of South Africa (NAPHISA) to be gazetted. In response to a question during the National Assembly in late 2014, the Minister of Health responded that "NAPHISA will comprise the two existing Institutes: NICD (National Institute for Communicable Disease) and the NCR (National Cancer Registry). Two additional

institutes will be developed – the National Institute for Non-Communicable Diseases (NINCD) and the National Institute for Injury and Violence Prevention (NIIVP)."³ There was no mention of the NIOH, the third of the trio of institutes that is currently still part of the NHLS (National Health Laboratory Service). Two opinion pieces discuss the potential implications of the omission of the NIOH from NAPHISA.

Meanwhile, research continues at the NIOH, and we are very pleased to be able to publish the abstracts from the 2015 Research Day. SAIOH set the precedent for this; please view this platform as an opportunity for disseminating your research findings. One of the presentations, by Jeanneth Manganyi and colleagues, brings us back to the issue of poor fitting PPE – respirators, in this case.

On a positive note, in August 2015, The Southern African Trust reported that there has been progress in the payment of financial compensation to ex-miners from the Compensation Commissioner for Occupational Diseases, with more to come: "...as of April 2015 the Medical Bureau of Occupational Diseases and Compensation Commission for Occupational Diseases committed to paying successful claimants within three months of them submitting claims."⁴

The MMPA held their Annual Congress last month, and judging from the report, it was a great success. SAIOH members have been busy strengthening their international collaborations, especially with the International Occupational Hygiene Association (IOHA). I wish SASOHN, SAIOH and SASOM well for their upcoming conferences, and hope to receive some papers from the presenters in the very near future.

REFERENCES

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