

## A FOCUS ON THE ENDOCRINE SYSTEM

The Editorial Board of AIPM is pleased to present another fresh and highly educative edition of the Journal. This edition, which follows the best selling one on *Medical Statistics*, focuses on the endocrine system.

It is estimated that 50% or more of the human genome codes for genes are nervous system specific. The human nervous system is an enormously complex tissue serving the organism as a processing center linking information between the body and outside world. The nervous system is the body's most important coordinating system but its functions are dependent on the other coordinating systems, chief of which is the endocrine system. Signaling by extracellular secreted molecules can be classified into three types; autocrine, paracrine, or endocrine, based on the distance over which the signal acts. In endocrine signaling, the secreted molecules, which are frequently called hormones, act on target cells distant from their site of synthesis. The endocrine system contains a highly integrated and widely distributed group of organs that orchestrate a state of metabolic equilibrium, or homeostasis, between the various organs of the body.

Featured in this edition are high quality articles on the endocrine system. Dr Ayoola reviews recent advances in childhood diabetes mellitus. Diabetes mellitus is a syndrome characterized by disturbed metabolism of carbohydrate, protein, and fat. It is a chronic metabolic disorder caused by an absolute or relative deficiency of insulin. This review article takes the reader through the recent changes in diagnostic criteria, the current modalities of management, the acute emergencies, genetic associations and developments in the search for a lasting cure for the disorder. The article on multiple pituitary hormone deficiency caused by PIT-1 mutation and the challenges of management in a developing country discusses a rare disorder and the unique approach by the author to managing the case in a resource limited setting. The incidence of hyperglycemic emergencies is increasing worldwide. Early detection and prompt management is vital to the survival and quality of life of the patient. Dr Balogun reviews the strategies for prevention of hyperglycemic emergencies in Nigeria. The disease review segment gives a bird's eye view of diseases and syndromes of the endocrine system. Featured also in this edition are other articles that should be of great interest to all doctors and residents going for fellowship exams. Tympanic membrane perforation is common in the general populace. Dr Olowokere and others reveal that the incidence may be as high as 13.5%. The remedy for this malady is early diagnosis and treatment of all cases and proper education of parents and guardians. They also advocate early referral to specialists. There is also an interesting report on vesico-

vaginal fistula in Ibadan and the clinical characteristics of the patients managed and surgical approach to management of this disabling and highly stigmatized condition. Perhaps the most common complaint of patients in the general population is pain, and analgesics are among the most abused drugs. This edition features an article on prescriptions involving analgesic drugs at a secondary health facility in Ibadan. The practice of medicine cannot be separated from the extensive use of drugs. Sadly, almost every group of drugs has been abused by the general population and the principles of rational use of drugs are not well appreciated by physicians. While our practice is heavily dependent on the use of drugs it should be stated here that thousands of ineffective and dangerous drugs are being very skillfully promoted in virtually all countries in the world especially developing countries. Taking this into consideration the IOCU (International Organization of Consumers Union) believes that drugs should;

- Meet real medical need, i.e. their use is likely to improve a particular health problem
- Be effective therapeutically, i.e. they must do what is claimed of them
- Be acceptably safe, i.e. their likely benefits must far outweigh their risks
- Offer good value for money, i.e. those that cost less and work as well as other drugs are preferred
- Be provided with adequate and clear information for optimal and safe use, and
- Be available and affordable.

This summarizes the position of the Editorial Board of this journal. Let us practice safe prescription of drugs.

Chronicles of medical history continues to explore great people, moments, and publications in the history of medicine. In this edition the controversial origins of human ideas and the role of the human mind in the intuitive appreciation of truth is briefly discussed. This is further elaborated by the reproduction of the first publication on what can be rightly considered the greatest malady of man, *Malaria*. The history of malaria is a long one and despite all the advances of modern medicine it remains the biggest cause of mortality in children. It is interesting to note that the beginning of malaria is in the continent of Africa and the very first documentation of the disease and its causative agent are reproduced without any modification to the original publication in 1880 (translated from the French).

Case reports have made significant contributions to medicine. Gastrointestinal stromal tumors (GIST) are the most common mesenchymal tumors of the

gastrointestinal tract (GIT), but make up only about 1% of all GIT tumors. Dr Akere and others report a case of this tumor in a 49 year old man who presented with recurrent upper abdominal pain of 9 years duration.

The journal is making positive giant strides. The inaugural speech delivered by the in coming Editor-in-Chief, Dr. K Adigun, to mark the commissioning of the AIPM office complex is a testimony to this claim. Our indexing at AJOL (Africa Journals Online) and AIM (Africa Index Medicus) are intact, the cover page of the journal is constantly improving as it is now being designed with experts of the fine arts, and the Editorial Board has initiated contact with the National Library of Medicine for PUBMED indexing. It has been an exciting journey of

success all the way; to the Almighty God be the glory. It is our responsibility to offer our scholarly contributors the most extensive international visibility possible. With the recent deluge of submitted articles we are working tirelessly to put in place all that is required to attain the desired international visibility. The journal's website is currently being redesigned. We continue to attract the best resident doctors during interviews for Board membership and are looking forward to a time when this journal will claim the highest impact factor in the West Africa sub-region. This is our goal and we are determined to achieve it.

Michael S.O.  
*Editor-in-Chief*