

# FIGO and JOGC

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Editor-in-Chief

Welcome to the FIGO issue of the Journal. Coinciding with each triennial World Congress of Gynecology and Obstetrics, we publish an issue focusing on topics in international women's health and Canada's relations with those topics. This year, for the first time, we will be printing the issue in the Congress's host country, South Africa. This has provided odd challenges for the Journal's production team, but, because you are now reading this, you can assume that the challenges were met. What it means if you're not reading this is—well, it's one of those unanswerable questions.

For Canadian readers, the articles in this issue will not necessarily change the way they practise. But the articles will, I hope, give readers in Canada and other developed countries food for thought. For example, a sobering perspective on maternal health in a developing country is provided by the article in this issue by Yasir Khan and co-authors.<sup>1</sup> Their revelation that in Pakistan a woman dies every 20 minutes from obstetric complications is horrifying. That the specific causes of maternal mortality are almost always preventable is of equal concern. But through a thoughtful analysis of the background, the authors provide an outline of a system that could make a substantial difference to the alarming rate of maternal mortality in Pakistan.

The unifying theme for these articles is maintaining progress towards the Millennium Goals. The report card from Lindsay Edouard and Stan Bernstein in this issue<sup>2</sup> indicates that, while progress is being made, it is not uniform. It is disappointing, but perhaps not surprising, that progress towards the maternal health goal lags behind the progress towards other goals. One of the mainstays of progress towards improved maternal health and reduced maternal morbidity and mortality is the ready availability of skilled birth attendants, ideally from within each community. Training these attendants is a logistical and financial challenge. In her article, Sylvia Deganus describes a simple and practical means of producing teaching models for the development of obstetrical and gynaecological skills in

lower-resource areas.<sup>3</sup> Her description of the models she and her co-workers use in Ghana is a cheerful reminder that enthusiasm for teaching and learning, and technical ingenuity, are universal.

Canada's role in improving international women's health, and driving towards the Millennium Development Goals, is a significant one, and members of the SOGC in particular can be proud of the contribution that the Society is making. One aspect of the SOGC's involvement that I have found particularly moving is the "twinning" of professional associations in regions of higher and lower resource capacity to facilitate progress in FIGO's Saving Mothers and Newborns Project, described in the article by André Lalonde and Heather McMullen.<sup>4</sup> The "twinning" mechanism is a generous sharing of administrative and professional expertise, and it deserves our full support.

As you will see, each of the articles in this special issue provides grounds for optimism, however daunting the challenges to international women's health appear. To summarize these challenges, I am especially grateful that Dorothy Shaw, the outgoing President of FIGO, has done just that in her Guest Editorial.<sup>5</sup> During her three years as President of FIGO, she has provided representation of the highest order for care providers throughout the world, and has raised the profile of FIGO amongst her Canadian colleagues.

I hope that all JOGC readers find the articles in this special FIGO issue enjoyable and enlightening.

## REFERENCES

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