

## PREFACE

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This Jubilee year is one of rejoicing and celebration of the 50 years of independence of Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago. It is one of reflection of what has been done in the past and what still remains to be done and the West Indian Medical Journal cannot stand aside from this celebration. It has a responsibility to participate born out of its origin as the premier scientific publication of the Caribbean, out of the responsibility it bears because of its location in the premier academic institution in the Caribbean and because the progress of the past 50 years in health has been due in part to the kinds of research and practice that have often found their way into the pages of the Journal. The Journal can feel justifiably proud of the extent to which it has accompanied the progress in health over these 50 years.

The material presented in this issue represents a small fraction of the output of Caribbean scholars and the efforts they are making to explore and document the health problems of the region. It is salutary to note that the publications come from throughout the Caribbean as it is fit and proper that the celebration of the independence of two of our Caribbean countries is a cause for rejoicing in all. The geographical scope of the material is also proof positive of the commonality of many of the health problems in our region and the feasibility of looking for collectivity of policy even in the presence of individualization of practice.

Even as we note commonality of health issues, we must observe the breadth of the approaches to them and one critical aspect that must be noted is the reach and possible application of the findings shown here. Some of the work is intentionally parochial and that is fit and proper as the explanation of local problems often depends on the application of the best talents to finding local solutions. But in addition, some of the publications have an importance and salience beyond the Caribbean and is a marvelous demonstration that there is no predetermined geographical distribution of talent, and Caribbean scientists can, on the basis of research done locally, make deposits into the global bank of knowledge from which others in far distant lands may draw. The material is also demonstration of the changing pattern of Caribbean health as some of the problems that are upon the people today and are addressed here would not have had the same cachet and relevance 50 years ago.

While welcoming the contribution of current scholars, we should take a moment to remember those who are no longer with us but laid the foundation for much of what is done today. We should also acknowledge the sterling contribution over the past 50 years of those often unseen individuals who have ensured the continuation and scientific prosperity of the Journal.

Much of the celebration of independence will have a political flavour, and will record countries moving to demonstrate their confidence in their capacity to manage their own affairs without the supervision of others. It is not irrelevant to note that this celebration of fifty years of political independence coincides with celebration of the academic independence of our own University, which fifty years ago gracefully but firmly renounced the tutelage of the University of London and became the University of the West Indies. While acknowledging the political nature of much of the celebration and recognizing that the WIMJ is not a journal of political science, it was refreshing to see among the papers in this issue thought provoking presentations that linked some aspects of health with our history and with the effects or politics of the colonial experience. A thesis was preferred that even in those who had migrated from the Caribbean there were aspects of their health that bore the mark of that previous recent post-colonial experience or experience that stretched even further back into the history of our people.

Academic institutions are durable entities and commitment to search for knowledge is part of their genetic material. The form of disseminating this material has varied over the years from the clay tablets of the pharaohs through Gutenberg to the combination of bits and bytes which currently encode our words and thoughts. The physical form which this Journal will take over the next 50 years is not known now, but what is sure is that as long as there is the basic human urge to communicate and as long as there are companies of masters and scholars and as long as there are problems whose solution depends on careful thought, enquiry and analysis, there will be some organ for the communication of various perceptions of the truth. So I have no doubt that at the celebration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the independence of the two countries we consider now, there will be a collation and presentation of the truth of that day and I am sure that it will be as valuable to the citizens of the Caribbean and beyond as the material presented in this celebratory jubilee issue.

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