

Welcome!

This is the first edition of the Alma Mata journal of Global Health, abbreviated to 'AMjGH'. For those unfamiliar with the work of Alma Mata, you only have to look overleaf to discover the aims and aspirations of the group. In the four years since its inception, the progress and evolution of Alma Mata has been such that the production of a regular publication felt like a natural 'next step'.

So what are the aims of this journal? What do we hope to achieve by publishing it? The strengths and achievements of Alma Mata include its successes at bringing together like-minded health professionals, sharing resources and ideas with the ultimate goal of improving global health. Until now, the website (www.almamata.net) has been the organisation's main forum, with three conferences and a careers day further enhancing our activities. But since Johannes Gutenberg developed his printing press in the 15th century, print has been the medium with which the greatest amount of information has been disseminated. Evidently, the advent of the internet has improved this, providing a more affordable means with which to communicate ideas and information. So what advantage, or even purpose, do journals now hold?

A journal was and remains a collection, a short cut, to information - be it news, re-

search, jobs or conference listings. With this journal, we aim to use the website and its readers to determine what is published. The articles and features with the most hits, i.e. the most popular aspects of the website, will be included in the latest edition and will guide the content of the features and articles commissioned. This, as far as Alma Mata is aware, is the first time such a method has been employed in the production of an academic journal. It effectively involves the website's users in the production of the journal, thus adding a degree of flexibility and a much greater number of individuals to the editorial process.

Additionally, we recognise that a large amount of global health research and information - effective 'content' - is inaccessible. Every year, over one hundred medical students graduate from Intercalated International Health BScs in London, Leeds, Bristol, Birmingham and Edinburgh. There are countless post graduate courses relating to global health, both in the UK and overseas. This begs the question: what happens to the potentially useful and informative academic work and research generated by these courses? A minority of it finds its way into peer-reviewed journals; but inevitably, the vast majority stays on a university server or a personal hard-disk drive, never to see the light of day beyond the pupil and its assessor.

Editorial

Through this journal, we want to bring this work into the open - to bring useful insights, essays and research into the public domain. For this to happen, the original concept of the Alma Mata website needs to be reignited. There are now over one thousand Alma Mata members - a substantial number of individuals interested in global health. We hope that the production of a journal will enthuse and encourage these individuals to contribute new content. Maintaining the website's status as a source of information to those wishing to pursue the improvement of global health has been one of Alma Mata's primary goals since its inception.

Perhaps the most salient of Alma Mata's current activities is lobbying for and participating in the development of internationally focused training for NHS staff. But we grew from the International Health BScs, and so we begin with selected pieces by students who have undertaken the degree. Peter Baker and Ashley Sharp give their respective answers to fundamental questions surrounding economics and global health, while Lucie Collinson writes the first of her series on the role of the International Community in humanitarian crises.

The Alma Mata website has always had interviews and accounts of work in the global health field. With recognition of this, we feature accounts from two very different global health experiences. Kiran Jobanputra talks about his work with MSF in Somalia, while Peter Bamford describes his experience working at the Kolinska Institute in Sweden.

Finally, we feature a piece from the working group and profile those currently active

within it in various areas. Along with writing pieces such as these, the working group is currently involved with improving post-graduate opportunities for those health professionals who wish to work abroad during their careers. This has been one of our biggest areas of activity in recent years and we hope that this journal will join it.

Gareth Lewis
Dave Baguley
Danni Kirwan

Co-editors

The Editors / Editorial Panel wish to thank all contributing authors and peer-reviewers for their contributions towards this first edition of the Alma Mata Journal of Global Health.