EDITORIAL

Laboratory medicine is an integral part of healthcare, the accuracy and reliability of medical laboratory examination results are vital part in healthcare delivery, and these plus the effective operation of laboratories are the main stay of health services.

The June 2010 edition of the journal has several original articles from laboratory medicine. The article on routine antenatal syphilis screening in southwest Nigeria – a questionable practice; is one that is being debated, the rational of performing routine antenatal syphilis screening depends on the prevalence of syphilis in the antenatal population. The authors in this study got a low prevalence of syphilis using the Venereal Disease Research Laboratory (VDRL) test. This would imply either a low sensitivity of the test method or an actual low prevalence. The authors rightly concluded that diagnostic tests with higher sensitivity may be necessary before discontinuing the traditional screening methods.

Bacterial conjunctivitis is a microbial infection involving the mucous membrane of the surface of the eye. This condition, which is usually a benign self-limited illness, sometimes can be serious or signify a severe underlying systemic disease. Occasionally, significant ocular and systemic morbidity may result. The article on the microbiological profile of bacterial conjunctivitis in Ibadan, Nigeria demonstrated a high antibiotic resistance to the commonly used chloramphenicol, therefore determining the susceptibility pattern of these pathogens to available antibiotics is important for effective management.

The haemoglobinopathies are inherited single-gene disorders; in most cases, they are inherited as autosomal co-dominant traits. It is estimated that 7% of world's population (420 million) are carriers, with 60% of total and 70% pathological being in Africa. Hemoglobinopathies are most common in ethnic populations from Africa, the Mediterranean basin and Southeast Asia.

These conditions comprise a very large number of genetic biochemical/physiological entities, most of which are academic curiosities whose major effect on medicine is to add to the surfeit of useless scientific information. However, several of these conditions (e.g., sickle cell anemia, hemoglobin SC disease, and some thalassemias) are common major life-threatening diseases, and some others (e.g., most thalassemias, hemoglobin E disease, and hemoglobin O disease) are conditions that produce clinically noticeable — if not serious — effects and can cause the unaware physician a lot of frustration and the hapless patient a lot of expense and inconvenience. Guidelines for the diagnosis of the haemoglobinopathies are highlighted in this edition of the journal.

The article on foetal hemoglobin (HbF) status in adult sickle cell anaemia patients in Ibadan, Nigeria emphasizes the usefulness of hydroxyurea an antineoplastic drug which increases the concentration of foetal hemoglobin and reduces the number of pain crises in sickle cell patients.

Also in this edition of the journal there is the valedictory lecture of Prof. Falase, former vice chancellor of the University of Ibadan.

I hope this edition would be as educative and informative as the other editions; we welcome more articles from the resident doctors as we strive to make this journal enviable amongst other resident journals. We also like to thank our various reviewers for their input which have gone a long way in improving the quality of articles.

Dr. N.A. Aikpokpo
Acting Editor-in-Chief