The Society of Endocrinology, Metabolism and Diabetes of South Africa (SEMDSA) was inaugurated in 1959, and is arguably the oldest medical society in South Africa. The annual SEMDSA congress started in 1966. On behalf of the SEMDSA Local Organising Committee (LOC) it is my pleasure to welcome you to our 45th Annual Congress at the Southern Sun Elangeni Hotel in Durban. The year 2010 will undoubtedly be remembered for the FIFA World Cup but we hope that our congress will leave an equally indelible memory for all of you. To this end we are delighted to have a host of world-renowned international speakers who are at the pinnacle of their “game”. The John Terry, Fernando Torres and Cristiano Ronaldo of the “endocrinology world” are Professors David Matthews from the Oxford Centre for Diabetes Endocrinology & Metabolism, Kenneth Polonsky from Washington University School of Medicine and Paul Stewart from Birmingham. They certainly need no introduction to our society.

The conventional paradigm for 90% of type 2 diabetes is that polygenic susceptibility is inherited, and the clinical disease is precipitated by environmental factors (notably sedentary lifestyle and obesity). However the nature of the genetic susceptibility has remained elusive and is unlikely to be homogenous across different ethnic groups around the globe. Professor Polonsky, a Wits graduate, and now Head of Medicine at Washington University, will dribble around “The genetics of type 2 diabetes: what do we know?” He has also performed and published elegant studies of pancreatic beta-cell function, and will dive into “The role of the pancreatic $\beta$-cell in type 2 diabetes: Bystander or culprit”. Professor David Matthews, a lead investigator for the UKPDS studies, will also challenge the conventional paradigm, and lend new insights into “The type 2 diabetes epidemic - a new infectious plague?” Also, despite the clear epidemiological evidence that obesity precedes insulin resistance and type 2 diabetes, there appears to be a widely espoused myth that insulin resistance causes obesity. Professor Matthews will defend “Insulin resistance as a benefit more than a problem”.

Professor Paul Stewart from the University of Birmingham is world renowned for his work on adrenal disorders. He will strike at “Advances in endocrine hypertension”, “The role of 11$\beta$-hydroxysteroid dehydrogenase in health and disease” and “Guidelines for the management Cushing’s syndrome and adrenal incidentalomas”.

This year’s congress also sees the first Paediatric and Adolescent Endocrine and Diabetes Society (PAEDS- SA) session being incorporated into the programme and we hope that this will become an annual event. Their keynote speaker is Stephen Waguespeck, an oncologist and endocrinologist from Houston, Texas who will tackle adolescent thyroid malignancies as well as the endocrine consequences of childhood malignancies.

Our local scientists have not disappointed this year, and the original papers submitted have been of high standard, particularly in the field of basic-science research. Clinical research is however lagging, and SEMDSA will need to tackle this issue with renewed zest. We also need to think of new ways of growing this Congress and Society as a whole.

The LOC wishes to acknowledge all our pharmaceutical partners and sponsors, without whom this congress would not be possible. We appreciate the difficult financial climate that prevails and appreciate the ongoing support that our congress has enjoyed. Special thanks are owed to our congress secretariat, Shelley Harris, for her persevering hard work and dedication to SEMDSA. Our thanks and appreciation also go to all of our invited speakers for their graciousness and willingness to accommodate the Congress needs. On a personal note, I wish to thank all the individual members of the LOC for their input, assistance, support and guidance.

Finally, LOC recognises the need for “off-the-field” entertainment and this year’s social highlight will undoubtedly be the visit to Durban’s recently completed Moses Mabhida Stadium. This architectural landmark will feature prominently around the globe in June-July 2010, and our delegates will relish the experience of knowing that “we were there”. The “warmest city in South Africa” welcomes you all, and wishes you a fruitful congress.

Siyakwamukela!

Aslam Amod
Chairperson: Local Organising Committee
SEMDSA 2010