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ISSN 0256-9574

Publisher Website: www.hmpg.co.za
Journal Website: www.samj.org.za



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Abundant but little known, moss or lace animals fall in the Phylum Bryozoa, four species of which are shown here, surrounded by feathery hydroids. Some form flat crusts on rocks, others are upright and leafy, and many resemble small corals. Each colony comprises multiple individuals, visible as tiny dots, each of which is encased in a tiny coffin-like skeleton of exquisite beauty. Most individuals have tentacles and are responsible for feeding, but some called 'avicularia' develop structures like a bird's head and use their 'beaks' to snap at intruders settling on the colony. Several species have attracted the attention of pharmaceutical companies because they contain chemicals that have potential as anticancer agents.

Photo and text: George Branch
 Email: mbranch@mweb.co.za

Contents listed in

Index Medicus (Medline).
 Excerpta Medica (EMBASE).
 Biological Abstracts (BIOSIS).
 Science Citation Index (SciSearch). Current
 Contents/Clinical Medicine

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Subscription rates

Local subscriptions R1 044.00 p.a.
 Foreign subscriptions R2 352.00 p.a.
 Single copies R95.00

Members of the Association receive the SAMJ only on request, as part of their membership benefit.

Subscriptions: Tel. (012) 481-2071
 E-mail: members@samedical.org

The SAMJ is published monthly by the Health and Medical Publishing Group (Pty) Ltd,

Co. registration 2004/0220 32/07, a subsidiary of SAMA.

28 Main Road (Cnr Devonshire Hill Road), Rondebosch, 7700

Tel. (021) 681-7200.

E-mail: publishing@hmpg.co.za

Website: www.samedical.org

Please submit all letters and articles for publication online at www.samj.org.za

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 Creda Communications



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