

## HIV/AIDS Twinning Center Projects in Namibia

### Training Medical Technologists to Support HIV Care and Treatment Services

Namibia's response to its HIV/AIDS epidemic has been hindered by a lack of qualified medical technologists, who play a crucial role in HIV care and treatment by informing decisions related to ART, as well as the diagnosis and treatment of opportunistic infections.

Currently, there are only 160 medical technologists in the country and the infrastructure and expertise to train more lab professionals does not exist.

Members of a Twinning Center partnership established in December 2007 with PEPFAR support are working to change this by launching a new bachelor's degree program in medical technology. The CDC-funded partnership links the Polytechnic of Namibia in Windhoek with the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) in Little Rock.

Drawing on UAMS's extensive experience training medical technologists and managing an effective medical technology program, partners are working to build the institutional and human resource capacity needed to effectively support Namibia's laboratory services.

The overall goal of the partnership is to develop a four-year medical technology degree program at the Polytechnic of Namibia. Specific objectives are to:

- Enhance the quality of medical diagnostics services in Namibia by increasing the number of medical technologists (Bio-medical Scientists);
- Strengthen the Polytechnic's capacity to provide continuing education to practicing scientists; and
- Strengthen the Polytechnic's the capacity to deliver a medical technology curriculum in keeping with international standards and ensure that key student competencies are achieved.

To date, partners have conducted three professional exchanges, including one in Arkansas that provided Polytechnic faculty with the opportunity to evaluate laboratory curriculum for microbiology, hematology, clinical chemistry and cellular pathology at UAMS.

### Namibia Country Overview



Namibia has an HIV prevalence rate of 19.6 percent and AIDS has been the leading cause of death in the West African nation of 2 million inhabitants since 1996.

Sexual contact and mother-to-child transmission are the primary modes of HIV infection. Women account for 58 percent of Namibia's HIV infections, putting them in the same high-risk category along with migrant workers, sex workers, and long-distance drivers.

With support from the US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and the United States Government team in country, the HIV/AIDS Twinning Center began working in Namibia in December 2007 and currently manages one partnership there.

Upcoming activities include presentations of continuing education workshops for practicing professionals in Namibia and continued development of the Polytechnic's new medical technology curriculum and related training materials.