

## HIV/AIDS Twinning Center Projects in South Africa

### Training Nurses in HIV Case Management to Improve Quality of Care and Patient Outcomes

As more and more South Africans commence ART, their HIV infection necessitates a long-term approach to wellness similar to other chronic diseases such as diabetes or asthma. For these patients, effective case management is a critical part of the complex care they need to help ensure their physical and emotional health.

Partners at the Pretoria-based Foundation for Professional Development (FPD) are working with the University of California-San Francisco (UCSF) School of Nursing to improve the coordination of HIV-related care and services by implementing a nursing case management model at ARV clinics supported by FPD.

Partners conducted a pilot training workshop on nursing care management in HIV/AIDS for nine nurses in November 2008, along with a subsequent focus group for the nine participants to explore the impact of this training. Analysis of data collected through this process demonstrated that the training was useful and provides necessary knowledge in terms of coordination of services for better case management.

To address the challenges nurses confront when trying to incorporate better case management into their day-to-day practice, partners conducted a stakeholders meeting during which attendees agreed to support the development and implementation of case management in the clinics where they work.

Upcoming activities will include training and mentoring for nurses working with participating ARV clinics that are piloting case management and garnering political support for the nurse case management model.

### Bolstering HIV Care by Improving Research and Reporting, Informing Health Policies

Tuberculosis is the most common serious opportunistic infection in individuals living with HIV in Sub-Saharan Africa. In South Africa's Free State Province, more than 70 percent of all patients with active TB are also infected with HIV. Despite high rates of co-morbidity, however, only 65 percent of tuberculosis patients are

### South Africa Country Overview



South Africa is home to a racially and culturally diverse population of 45 million people, including 5.7 million people living with HIV. Facing an HIV prevalence rate of 18.1 percent, the government launched a comprehensive HIV/AIDS Care, Management, and Treatment Plan in 2003 to promote access to free ARVs. As of September 2007, some 329,000 people were on ART. A sharp rise of multi-drug resistant TB among HIV patients poses a significant threat and has prompted national efforts to integrate treatment for HIV, TB, STIs, and other communicable diseases.

With support from the US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and the US government team in country, the HIV/AIDS Twinning Center manages two partnerships and a Volunteer Healthcare Corps initiative in South Africa. A third partnership is currently under development.

In 2006, the Twinning Center established a country office in Pretoria to provide programmatic and logistical support to partners in South Africa and other countries in the region. Staff also work closely with local government agencies and the US Government team to identify and facilitate needs-driven partnerships.



Free State partners Christo Heunis and Gert van Zyl (standing from left) and Anita van der Merwe and Letitia Moja (seated from left) with SUNY partners David Odegaard and Jack DeHovitz (standing at right) and the Twinning Center's John Capati (seated at right) during a recent professional exchange in Bloemfontein.

tested for HIV.

Partners at the University of the Free State's Centre for Health Systems Research and Development (CHSRD) and the State University of New York (SUNY) Downstate Medical Center are working together to study the evolving HIV-TB epidemic and develop appropriate, effective responses to the public health challenges co-infection with both diseases presents.

With the goal of building the institutional capacity needed to translate HIV and TB research into scientific data that can effectively inform related health policies and practices, partners are collaborating to strengthen CHSRD's data management capabilities, as well as its ability to efficiently disseminate research findings in Free State and throughout South Africa.

During the summer of 2008, CHSRD faculty participated in intensive courses in epidemiology, biostatistics, and data management at Johns Hopkins University in Maryland. Free State partners then traveled to SUNY Downstate for additional professional development training. What they learned is now bolstering their ability to effectively conduct and evaluate scientific research.

In November 2008, two SUNY faculty members travelled to Bloemfontein to conduct an advanced training course on biostatistics and epidemiology for 28 researchers and public health managers from CHSRD and the University's Department of Psychology and School of Nursing. Provincial and district level representatives of the Free State Department of Health and the Medical Research Council also attended this event.

SUNY faculty provided additional training and technical assistance on implementation science, operational

research, and counseling and testing, as well as one-on-one mentoring on how to prepare and present scientific research with a particular focus on current projects being conducted by CHSRD researchers.

SUNY will provide additional training on counseling and testing in support of the implementation phase of CHSRD's ongoing TB VCT project. Partners will also continue work on various articles for co-publication.

### **Clinical Associates Program**

The Twinning Center is currently in the process of establishing a new partnership designed to bring qualified medical personnel into the South African workplace more quickly and effectively. The partnership will link one or more South African universities with counterpart institutions in the United States and Africa that have strong pre-service training programs, which can serve as models for the education and training of a new cadre of medical professionals .

### **Volunteer Healthcare Corps — South Africa Preceptors Initiative**

In an effort to support the rapid expansion of ARV treatment services in South Africa, the HIV/AIDS Twinning Center began actively recruiting infectious disease specialists and other experts through its Volunteer Healthcare Corps (VHC) in late 2007.

With the goal of increasing the institutional and human resource capacity of HIV care and treatment centers, the South Africa Preceptors Initiative places highly skilled professionals at PEPFAR-supported sites, where they serve as onsite technical experts.

Preceptors volunteer at sites for a period ranging from three months to two years with the dual goals of increasing institutional capacity to deliver and expand quality HIV/AIDS treatment and care services and increasing staff competencies in HIV-related treatment and care. Preceptors mentor staff; support the provision of services as needed by providing technical assistance; and help with program expansion, quality control, and other tasks beneficial to the host institution.

As of May 2009, the Twinning Center has placed nine volunteers at South African institutions, including infectious disease experts, an epidemiologist, and a monitoring and evaluation specialist. Active recruiting is currently under way for existing placements in a broad range of health and related areas of expertise.



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