

## SA Cuban-trained doctors graduate at Jameson Hall

Health Minister Dr Aaron Motsoaledi has urged medical graduates to be the "agents of change" and uphold a high moral and caring ethos to help South Africa turn around the ailing health care system.

At a graduation, at UCT on 7 July, of 40 medical students who were part of the South Africa-Cuba Health Cooperation Agreement, Motsoaledi described the current health care system as "expensive, destructive and unsustainable", saying the government was unapologetically trying to overhaul it.

The South Africa-Cuba training is one of its initiatives to do so. The programme began after 1994 as an attempt to address the dwindling number of doctors in the country, and as medical schools were not producing enough black graduates, in particular. Candidates for the programme are drawn from under-privileged communities, and undergo eight years of medical training in Cuba and locally, and graduates serve in the most under-resourced areas.

So far 246 students have graduated from the programme, and a further 388 are in training. Every South African university has an opportunity to host a graduation ceremony for qualifying students, and this year it was UCT's turn.

Motsoaledi told the graduates: "The fact that you have endured long periods of separation from



your families in order to build a better future for yourselves and your country indicates your commitment to development, and I am confident that you will make your contribution to our public health system in as robust a way as possible."

UCT vice-chancellor, Dr Max Price, noted that the graduation represents a remarkable collaboration between the government and South African universities, and between the country's different medical institutions.

Price said the South Africa-Cuba training programme is a unique system to increase the number of medical graduates and to increase opportunities to students who want to study medicine.

Graduate Bongile Mabilane said her experience in the programme was "priceless and irreplaceable", and is committed to render quality health care service to everyone irrespective of class, colour or creed.

- Daily News



Nelson Mandela turned 91 on 18 July, and the call has gone out for people everywhere to celebrate his birthday – and the global launch of Mandela Day – by acting on the idea that each person has the power to change the world.

The call by the Nelson Mandela Foundation and its sister

organisations for the creation of an official global Mandela Day, to be celebrated annually on 18 July, Mandela's birthday, is gaining momentum. Here in the Faculty of Health Sciences, we want to keep the momentum going for a bit longer in 2010. We call on all staff and students to take some time out of their day and either pop into their local store and buy a few non-perishable food items (there is a list of suggestions below) or take 67 minutes (or maybe even a few more!) to turn out a cupboard and sort through your or a member of your family's clothing to donate your unwanted clothing to a good cause! Donations of blankets - or even financial contributions -

would be gratefully received (if you would like to make a financial contribution, please contact Budre Rawoot on the contact details that appear below).

Suggested food parcel items:  
**Maize (2.5kg), sugar (1kg), dried beans, cooking oil, samp, rice (1kg), baked beans, pilchards, soup, Morvite (1kg), long life milk, soap, hand washing powder, dish washing liquid, blankets and old clothing** (adults and children), in good condition.

These items will be donated to The HDI Support Service, an NGO that works closely with the City of Cape Town's Disaster Relief Service. We know that at this time of the year, many shacks

in the City's townships have been flooded already and many people are desperately in need of the items mentioned. More cold and wet weather is on its way and the need is growing. We thought it fitting that this effort should be launched in the week following international Mandela Day, with its call that as many of us as possible do something small to help those in need.

You have from now until **30 July** to bring your contribution to either the Dean's office reception area during office hours, or if you would like someone to collect items from your office, call or email Budre Rawoot (tel 021 406 6107, Budre-Jahan.Rawoot@uct.ac.za).

# World attention for HIV+ renal transplants

# Congrats!

UCT surgeon Dr Elmi Muller and her team have received world attention for their historic transplants of kidneys from HIV-positive donors to HIV-positive recipients.

Since carrying out the world's first such transplant in October 2008, the team has performed nine similar procedures. The surgery was recently featured in *The New England Journal of Medicine*.

Muller, based in UCT's Department of Surgery and a full-time surgeon at Groote Schuur Hospital, is the clinical researcher who initiated and drove the project. For the transplants, she worked with Professor Marc Mendelson of the Division of Infectious Diseases, Professor Del Kahn of the Department of Surgery and Dr Zunaid Barday of the Division of Nephrology to ensure that all clinical aspects of this complicated procedure are covered.

The chief concern in the transplantation of a kidney from an HIV-positive donor to an HIV-positive recipient, explains Muller, is the potential risk of 'superinfection'. This is when a strain or

subtype of HIV triggers a more rapid progression of HIV in the transplant recipient.

Every care was taken, however, says Muller.



All organs came from donors who had died of unspecified causes, and who had received no antiretroviral therapy. They also had no history of opportunistic infections or cancer, and had no evidence of kidney disease on biopsy. In all cases the transplant recipients enjoyed good renal function after the transplant, without the need for dialysis.

"We have the biggest HIV population in the world, and therefore we have a lot of HIV positive donors," says Muller.

They are mostly ART-naïve, which means they have a low chance of carrying an ART-resistant strain of the

virus.

The transplant was prompted partly by her own research interest, partly by the need, says Muller. "We have a lot of HIV positive patients with end-stage renal failure in South Africa."

- Daily News

Congratulations to Prof Heather Zar, head of the Department of Child and Adolescent Health, who recently received a special award from the International Paediatric Pulmonology Association at their recent congress for "Outstanding Leadership in Paediatric Pulmonology and Distinguished Service to the Children with the Greatest Need". Prof Alastair Millar said that the award was a wonderful accolade and affirms the high regard for both the Department and her own achievements.

News from the Department of Psychiatry and Mental Health is that Katherine Gilfillan recently won the gold medal at the College of Psychiatrists of South Africa exams. Well done!

## Reminder

The inaugural lecture of Prof Heather Zar takes place on Wednesday, 28 July 2010.

The topic of her lecture is: "Child lung health in Africa—challenges and opportunities".

The venue is the Student Learning Centre Lecture Theatre and guests are asked to be seated by 17h15. Refreshments will be served after the lecture.



## Thrills and spills at the PG Soccer World Cup Tournament

Laboratories at the medical school tussled with one another recently - thankfully, not in the lab, but on the field of play, when the Faculty of Health Sciences' Postgraduate Students' Association (PGSA) hosted its annual mini-soccer tournament.

The four-a-side competition saw 12 teams (representing different laboratories) bring

students, supervisors and administrative staff together on social terms.

"People often interact with one another only at an academic level, and we wanted to use this event to bridge that communication gap," explains Alexis Bick, a PGSA committee member.

The event was also a fundraising initiative for the

student body (each team paid a R40 affiliation fee), and a celebration of the soccer world cup.

The team from the Human Genetics Laboratory won the tournament, taking away a floating trophy similar to the world cup (if perhaps a more cut-price version), medals, and the spirit prize for having the best supporters.



# SWC scenes @ FHS

On Vuvu Friday, blowing our vuvuzelas and waving to the motorists on the Anzio Road bridge over the M3. Note the 'no pedestrians' sign in the foreground!

