



Faculty News August 2007

Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Cape Town



Inaugural Lecture by Bongani Mayosi

Our inaugural lecture series continues this month with a lecture by the new Professor of Medicine, Bongani Mayosi. Here are all the details:

Date: 29 August 2007
 Time: 17h15
 Venue: Student Learning Centre, Anatomy Building, Faculty Health Sciences



Title: The Future of Medicine

Bongani Mawethu Mayosi graduated with a BMedSci (1987) and MBChB (1990) from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, and trained in medicine and cardiology in Cape Town. He was admitted to the Fellowship of the College of Physicians of South Africa in 1995. In 1998, he was awarded the Nuffield Oxford Medical Fellow to read cardiovascular genetics at the University of Oxford. His PhD thesis was on the “Genetic determination of cardiovascular risk factors in families.”

He returned to the University of Cape Town (UCT) and Groote Schuur Hospital (GSH) in 2001 where he continues to work as a physician, teacher, and researcher in internal medicine and cardiology. In January 2006, he was appointed Professor and Head of the Department of Medicine at the UCT and GSH. Mayosi’s academic work focuses on heart diseases of the poor, i.e., cardiomyopathy, tuberculous pericarditis, and rheumatic fever. These conditions, though major killers in Africa, receive little research attention, either in South Africa or globally.

Professor Mayosi is an established international leader in his field. In 2005, he was awarded the National Research Foundation President’s Award (or ‘P’ rating) and elected to the membership of the Academy of Sciences of South Africa in recognition of his contributions to medical science.

Celebrating National Women’s Day

The School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences is delighted to be hosting two events on 16 August to celebrate National Women’s Day. The guest speaker for the first event, to be held at 13h00 in Conference Room 4, in the Barnard Fuller Building, will be Professor Margaret Orr of the University of the Witwatersrand. This will be an opportunity to hear a woman of exceptional courage who has faced some of the hardest and most painful issues confronting women in academia today. The second event will be a seminar, facilitated by Professor Orr, and held upstairs in one of the post-graduate seminar rooms from 14h30 to 16h00. If you would like to attend either event, please contact 021 406 6346 or vuyo.mxenge@uct.ac.za.

Success with the National Institutes of Health

Two of our young academics have recently achieved what fewer than 10% of medical researchers in the USA have been able to accomplish: a competitive grant from the National Institutes of Health in which they are the principal investigators.

Dr Tania Douglas, a Senior Lecturer in Human Biology and member of the MRC/UCT Medical Imaging Research Unit, has succeeded with an R21 grant entitled “A smart microscope for the detection of tuberculosis in ZN-stained sputum smears.” She and her co-investigators have designed and constructed a computer-controlled instrument that will be used to obtain digital images of sputum slides, process the images automatically to detect TB bacilli, and store the results for human verification.

Dr Mark Hatherill, a Clinical Research Fellow with the South African Tuberculosis Vaccine Initiative in the IIDMM, has succeeded with an R01 grant entitled “Diagnostic yield of induced sputum for rapid diagnosis of pulmonary tuberculosis.” In this community-based study, Mark will test whether saline-induced sputum improves the diagnostic yield of smear positive TB in HIV-infected and HIV-uninfected adolescents and adults.



Since a delay in therapy for HIV-infected individuals may be fatal, the rapid diagnosis of pulmonary TB is especially critical. Although both projects are clearly related, neither Mark nor Tania knew of the other’s application, but now they will have an opportunity to combine forces!

Dean’s Corner

This month we celebrate Women’s Day, as a tribute to the 20,000 women who marched in protest against the pass laws on 9 August 1956, and as a reminder of the progress in acknowledging women’s contribution to society.

In health sciences, we have come a long way. For Hippocrates – the so-called “Father of Medicine” – extended this patriarchy to scientists. Female researchers were not allowed to do research on the Island of Cos, being relegated to a less prestigious facility in Asia Minor, where they could study gynaecology and obstetrics. After his death, Greek society regressed even further, banning women from medicine altogether, until an Athenian woman, Agnodice, changed this practice in 300BC.

Disguising herself as a man, she graduated as a doctor and, on revealing her identity, support from her female patients led to legislation which entitled women to study medicine.

Global progress has been slow, and just a generation ago, women's role in medicine was still largely confined to that of a patient. But the last three decades have been witness to change, with a significant upsurge in the number of women in medicine. Both Susan Blumenthal, former Assistant Surgeon General in the USA, and Carol Black, retired President of the Royal College of Physicians, have raised questions and challenges regarding the impact of this "feminisation" of medicine on practice in the future. In the context of a society in which gender inequalities prevail, and women retain the lion's share of domestic and family responsibilities, Black asserts her concern for a loss of power and influence of a profession dominated by women (*British Medical Journal*, 329:412-3, 2004).

This controversial view needs further discussion in our own Faculty where – in 2007 – more than two thirds of our students are female. Some issues for debate may include the need for marketing medicine as a career for men and – even more controversial – the appropriateness of prizes for which only women are eligible. But a bigger challenge lies in planning for transforming the profile of our Faculty leadership, for our current track record is dismal: only 6 of our 38 professors are women. Resolving these and many other issues can turn the fear of the feminisation time-bomb into an impetus for real progress.

[MJ]

Welcome to Neeran Naidoo

The Faculty is very pleased to welcome Neeran Naisoo as the new Manager of Communications, Marketing & Development. Neeran has a master's degree in communications from the University of Leicester, and has worked in publishing and newspapers. He was previously senior manager for communications and fund raising at the Centre for Conflict Resolution and prior to that was a special assistant to the former Speaker of the National Assembly, Dr Frene Ginwala. We look forward with great anticipation to his future work in the Faculty.



Publication of the Month

This month's publication comes from the Women's Health Research Unit (WHRU):

Warriner IK, Meirik O, Hoffman M, Morroni C, Harries J, My Huong NT, Vy ND, Seuc AH. "Complication rates of first-trimester manual vacuum aspiration abortion performed by physicians and mid-level providers (MLP) in South Africa and Vietnam: a randomised, controlled, equivalence trial" *The Lancet*, 368: 1965-1972, 2006.

There were two reasons for selecting this article: first, it appeared in one of the most influential and prestigious journals in medicine; and second, it has been recognized with a runner up prize for the 2006 Society of Medical Writers Academic Writing Award. It has been formally commended by the judges as "a paper that has been published in a peer reviewed medical journal, that was clearly and elegantly written without unnecessary jargon and that had a worthwhile and credible message."

The paper was based on research commissioned by the WHO and showed that nurses in South Africa and Vietnam are able to perform safe abortions in the early first trimester of pregnancy. The three WHRU members who contributed to the paper were Margaret Hoffman, Chelsea Morroni and Jane Harries.

Awards for Members of the Faculty

Professor Dele Amosun was recently recognized by the World Confederation for Physical Therapy at a meeting in Vancouver with the first ever award for international service for the great contribution he has made towards the development of physiotherapy education in Africa. One of our young MBChB students, Ms Maria Jose, has just returned from New York where she was one of 150 second-year students who were recognized as global leaders by Goldman Sachs.

Associate Professor Jenny Thomas, senior specialist in paediatric anaesthesia at Red Cross Children's Hospital, has been nominated as a Woman of Worth finalist by the Cape Times, V&A Waterfront and Vodacom for her work in pain management for children with burns. Ms Liane Azevedo, PhD student in Human Biology, recently won the Nike Award for Athletic Footwear Research for her paper entitled "Kinetic, kinematic and muscle activity variables associated with Achilles tendinopathy in runners." Not only was she presented with a statue of the goddess Nike (at right), she also received a cheque for \$25,000. That's some award!



Monthly Quiz

This month's question is about UCT physiology lecturer Harry Zwarenstein who, in 1933, developed the internationally recognized frog test for pregnancy. Who was his PhD supervisor at Manchester (a Nobel Laureate) and why were Zwarenstein's contributions not recognized by UCT? Send your answers to: kit.vaughan@uct.ac.za

Answer to last month's quiz: The last patient that Bill Hoffenberg looked after was Clive Haupt who had suffered a brain haemorrhage. Hoffenberg concluded that Haupt had suffered brain death and his family donated his heart for transplantation by Chris Barnard into Philip Blaiberg. Tahir Pillay was first with the correct answer and wins the book voucher. Well done Tahir!