

MEDIA RELEASE

27 June 2016

To : All Media

Attention : News Editors/ Health Journalists

Provincial Health will tap into research innovation for health system reforms

The province of KwaZulu-Natal is aiming to produce 20 high quality scientists who will be skilled to lead socially valuable, locally relevant and culturally sensitive research programmes designed around the health challenges facing South Africa and KwaZulu Natal.

This is the fundamental goal that underpins a strategic partnership between the University of KwaZulu Natal's College of Health Sciences and the KZN Department of Health on setting up a programme called DRILL (Developing Research Innovation, Localisation and Leadership).

Drill is a training programme that is driven by a joint mission between the UKZN and the Department in a renewed effort to groom a new generation of faculty members, who are suited to deliver, support and lead a reformed health professional training and development which will be located outside of the metropolitan areas in KwaZulu Natal.

The programme has its sights on running a five year multidisciplinary international research training programme for junior faculty members and healthcare managers. The training will look into establishing a new cadre of researchers and empowerment of Healthcare managers to be able to cope and respond to the changing societal trends.

Key areas of focus for the training will be:

- The fields of HIV and AIDS
- Mental Health
- Health Professions Education
- Health Systems Strengthening

UKZN's College of Sciences' Dr Mosa Moshabela says the intention is to impart knowledge on best health administration practices that are ideal for local communities and yet powerful and innovative enough to add value to the entire health system and individual career paths.

"In this programme we will seek to establish distinct world class scientists who will be



innovative through localised programmes and have the audacity to champion reforms. We can no longer continue to do the same things all the time; we have to keep up with the times and therefore adopt an approach to train doctors where they will work” says Dr Moshabela

The biggest concentration of doctors in training is currently in hospitals that are in the big metropolitan areas like Durban and Pietermaritzburg. The intention now is to do a flagship programme, where research and training will be spread across all districts. This is done in order to improve access to quality health care to the vast majority of citizens of KwaZulu Natal. Indeed, this will require a thorough intense capacity building programme that is envisaged to be implemented over a period of five years.

The Head of the Department, Dr Sifiso Mtshali announced that the Department is fully embracing the partnership with the University in as far as focuses on the health system, saying: ‘ We need to continue talking until we come to a point where we have a programme that talks to our needs. ’

KZN Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo also hailed the university for coming up with such an insightful programme, declaring; “This is something that we need to pat ourselves on the back and say, let us do our best with this one.”

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