



From the Director....

Progress over the past year at the NICD has been most satisfactory. The staff complement has now grown to 303 (as at end of 2007) with 225 being permanent employees and 78 on grant-funded contracts in addition to a number of students from South African Universities as well as a number from outside the country attached to various laboratories and units throughout the Institute.

The Poliomyelitis Research Foundation Training Centre, commissioned at the end of 2006, has proven to be an invaluable resource to the training and capacity building in communicable diseases providing a well-utilised venue for a number of training courses.



Figure 1: Avian influenza training programme in the James Gear Lecture Theatre (20-23 August 2007) with temporary booth for simultaneous translation.

The difficulty in providing suitable residential accommodation for short-term and long-term students remains a problem which will still need to be addressed. In addition to a number of training courses carried out in conjunction with the WHO, the NICD is responsible for the SAFELTP (South African Field Epidemiology and Laboratory Training Programme) now in its second year in 2008, with the first cohort of full-time students due to graduate with an MPH degree from University of Pretoria at the end of 2008. A second training CDC collaborative initiative, the ACILT (African Centre for Integrated Laboratory Training) has been developed following two international meetings in 2007 and 2008. This centre aims to train scientists and technologists from Sub-Saharan African countries in laboratory technologies, initially focussing on TB and HIV. The SACIDS (Southern African Centre for Infectious

Diseases Surveillance) initiative has also been developed during 2007. This initiative aims to establish a centre to strengthen diagnostic surveillance and research capacity throughout SADC countries in the veterinary, medical and agricultural infectious diseases fields, based on a concept of "one medicine". The NICD will play a leading role in the medical component of this programme.

On the site of the NICD, construction has commenced on the erection of the National TB Reference Laboratory in November 2007 and the building is expected to be completed and commissioned in August 2008. The BSL-4 laboratory complex has undergone extensive renovation, repair and upgrading and will be ready to be commissioned by mid-2008.

The Second James Gear Memorial was delivered by Professor Lynn Morris, the Head of the NICD AIDS Unit on November 20th, 2007. The title of her lecture was "Is a vaccine against HIV possible?" and it was attended by a capacity crowd.



Figure 2: Annual James Gear Memorial Lecture, 20 November 2007, delivered by Professor Lynn Morris. From left to right: Mr John Robertson (CEO, National Health Laboratory Service); Professor Lynn Morris; Professor Hendrik Koornhof; Professor Barry Schoub.

On this occasion a leather-bound volume of a specially commissioned Festschrift of the South African Medical Journal was presented to Prof Hendrik Koornhof on the occasion of his 80th birthday. The Festschrift was funded by the National Health Laboratory Service and was a companion to the November 2007 issue of the journal.



Figure 3: Presentation of leather-bound copy of Festschrift by Professor Schoub (left) to Professor Koornhof.



Figure 4: Visit by Dr Julie Gerberding (Director of CDC, Atlanta) to NICD, October 2007. From left to right: Professor Barry Schoub; Dr Julie Gerberding; Dr Okey Nwanyanwu (Chief-of-Party, CDC, Country Office, South Africa); Mr William Gimson (Chief Operating Officer, CDC, Atlanta).

The research output of the Institute was very satisfactory, with 106 publications during 2007 in addition to numerous presentations at international and national scientific meetings. Staff of the Institute received numerous national and international awards and recognition as detailed under the chapter "Staff & Student Achievements" (p92). Seven of our students graduated MSc and one PhD during 2007.

The NICD continues to enjoy excellent financial and moral support from its parent body the National Health Laboratory Service (NHLS), as well as the National Department of Health. In addition, the NICD is fortunate in receiving generous funding from many research funding organisations nationally and internationally as acknowledged at the end of the report (p99).

The NICD is truly blessed with a remarkable team of dedicated and loyal personnel and it has been a particular pleasure and privilege heading this wonderful Institute. I am sure that I echo the sentiments of all our staff in affirming our hope that all our efforts do make a meaningful contribution to bettering the health of the nation as well as beyond our borders.



Figure 5: Some members of staff of NICD in traditional dress on Heritage Day (24 September 2007).

Finally, I would like to acknowledge and express my thanks to Mr Guy Hall of the NHLS Photographic Department for many of the photographs in this report and to Ms Liz Millington for again putting together this excellent report.

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