



Epidemiology Division

South African Field Epidemiology & Laboratory Training Programme

BACKGROUND

Over the past 25 years, Field Epidemiology Training Programmes (FETP) have been established in over 33 countries worldwide. There are four such programmes in Africa (Ghana, Kenya including South Sudan, Uganda, and Zimbabwe). South Africa launched its Field Epidemiology and Laboratory Training Programme (SAFELTP) in May 2006, the second programme to have a laboratory component, Kenya being the other FELTP. Two additional FELTPs will be starting soon (Nigeria and Tanzania).

The South African Department of Health, the National Institute for Communicable Diseases, National Health Laboratory Services, the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention and the University of Pretoria, established this programme to build epidemiological capacity and strengthen public health laboratory practice in the South Africa.

The programme's main output is graduates with a Masters in Public Health (MPH) and two years supervised work experience and training aimed at strengthening practical skills and knowledge. The students participate in several core modules at the University of Pretoria and NICD and work under a supervisor for the remainder of the two years at a field placement site at national, provincial or district level within the Department of Health and the NHLS. On completion of all the requirements of the training programme, the field epidemiology fellows could take up positions as national and provincial epidemiologists, public health laboratorians, surveillance officers or other relevant positions in the South African public health system.

A limited number of short courses are also presented based upon needs identified by the Department of Health and NHLS.

ACTIVITIES, HIGHLIGHTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- Assisted in 11 outbreak investigations.
- Undertook 10 surveillance system evaluations.
- Conducted 10 analyses of large databases.



SA-FELTP students conducting an outbreak investigation in the field.

- Mr Brett Archer participated in the AFENET Evaluation of Preparedness and Response to Meningitis Epidemics within West Nile Province, Uganda.
- Drs Tetteh and Prentice assisted the Nigerian FELTP programme with the development and teaching of an outbreak short course adapting the SAFELTP course material.
- An Advisory Committee meeting was conducted attended by stakeholders from universities, Department of Health and the research community and CDC.
- Dr Bernice Harris coordinated the Diploma in Tropical Medicine and Hygiene for the University of Pretoria.
- Dr Bernice Harris lectured on managing outbreaks during the SHSPH of the University of Pretoria's "Introduction to Disease Prevention and Control" MPH module.
- Dr Bernice Harris assisted Mpumalanga with inter-campaign evaluation of the Measles and Polio campaign.
- Dr Elizabeth Prentice and Dr Faustine Ndugulile co-ordinated a laboratory track curriculum development workshop together with Eric Gogstad, Public Health Advisor, Division of Global Public Health Capacity Development, Coordinating Office of Global Health, CDC, Atlanta. The purpose of the workshop was to further develop the curriculum for the laboratory track of the 2 year residency SAFELTP course for next year.

- Dr Bernice Harris participated in the School of Public Health, University of the Witwatersrand assessment of research protocols for the fulltime MSc Epidemiology and Biostatistics and the MSc Field Based Epidemiology students.
- Dr Elizabeth Prentice attended the Wellcome Trust Summer School in Bioethics funded by Wellcome Trust.
- Dr Elizabeth Prentice attended the annual meeting of the International Partnership for Microbicides in Cape Town on behalf of the University of the Witwatersrand Ethics Committee and the IANPHI workshop in London on the impact of international sporting events.

SYMPOSIAND MEETINGS

Dr Bernice Harris presented on “Infectious Diseases Surveillance” at the Epidemic-Prone Infectious Disease Symposium of the National Department of Health, Johannesburg.

Dr Bernice Harris presented on “the Surveillance of Infectious Diseases” at the Emerging and Re-Emerging Infectious Diseases Conference, Midrand.

Dr Bernice Harris presented on “Current status of HIV, Malaria and TB in Sub-Saharan Africa” at the European Action in Global Life Sciences (EAGLES) Workshop in Pretoria.

Dr Elizabeth Prentice attended and presented at “The Global Challenge of Vaccination” - an international meeting regarding vaccinology, public health law and ethics in Philadelphia, USA.

Dr Bernice Harris presented on “the South African Field Epidemiology and Laboratory Training Programme - Training new disease detectives” at the 2nd FIDSSA Congress 2007, Cape Town.

Dr Elizabeth Prentice gave a talk entitled 'An update on ethics and vaccinations' at the Vaccinology Conference, Hermanus, 22-23 October 2007.

COLLABORATIONS

- The South African National and Provincial Departments of Health
- National Health Laboratory Services
- Other units in the National Institute for Communicable Diseases
- United States Centres for Disease Control and Prevention
- University of Pretoria
- American Society for Clinical Pathology

CAPACITY BUILDING

10 residents were enrolled in the MPH accredited programme (see picture below).

Three hundred and twenty laboratory managers and technologists in 2 provinces (KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape) were trained in 18 one day “Quality in Laboratory Practice for Chemistry and Haematology Tests used in the CCMT” workshops.



Back row (left to right): Mr Andries Khajoane, Ms Lindiwe Cele, Ms Mmampedi Huma, Mr Brett Archer, Sr Phumzile Zondo, Mr Benn Sartorius (coordinator), Mr Tebogo Mamahlodi, Dr Elizabeth Prentice (coordinator), Dr Bernice Harris (Director SAFELTP)
Front row (left to right): Dr Deliwe Nkosi, Sr Lulu Khumalo, Sr Funeka Wongama, Ms Charlene Jacobs