



A scheme may not prohibit the initiation of appropriate interventions prior to receiving authorisation for an emergency medical condition.

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## INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

### WEBSITE REVIEW: AFROAIDSINFO

According to the UNAIDS Report of November 2002, 27.5% of people in Southern Africa are HIV-positive – this translates to 9.5 million people. It is imperative to bring accurate, valid and credible information to the population to curb the pandemic. To this end, the Medical Research Council (MRC) launched their new HIV/AIDS portal, AfroAIDSinfo, at a function at the MRC Convention Centre in Cape Town recently.

AfroAIDSinfo is an Internet project of the South African Medical Research Council. The aim of the project is to disseminate important information on HIV/AIDS to researchers, the health profession, the public, infected individuals, educators and policy-makers.



*Dr Ebrahim Rasool, Minister of Finance and Economic Development in the Western Cape Government*

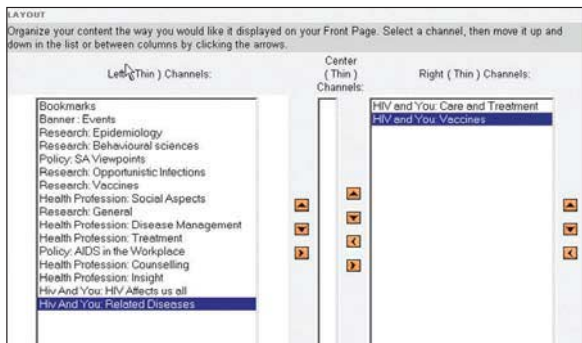
In declaring the portal open, Ebrahim Rasool, Western Cape Minister for Finance and Economic Development, said that good scientific information is the most important weapon in the fight against AIDS. Furthermore, he said that it is everyone's job to manage HIV/AIDS – it cannot be 'pigeonholed' into the health portfolio alone. AfroAIDSinfo has been formally endorsed by the Ministries of Health in both Botswana and South Africa.

The portal has been designed with a tremendous amount of thought and planning, and while it is not the prettiest website around, it sure is packed with information.

After spending time perusing the various sections dealing with the clinical and epidemiological and other issues concerning HIV/AIDS, one can go to the 'Gateway Links' which supplies a fairly good list of the major HIV/AIDS sites. I hope that the webmasters will add 'Red Ribbon', 'HIV InSite



Schoolchildren learn to navigate their way around the MRC portal.



Knowledge Base', 'The Body' and 'Secure the Future' to their list.

The 'Press Room' link on the site relays users to documents which deal with the role and content of the media in regard to HIV/AIDS. Much of the content is prepared by the Centre for AIDS Development, Research and Education (CADRE), in Johannesburg.

Finally, the major factor that makes the site attractive to users is its fast speed. There are no fussy graphics, and while it has its own character and branding, this is done in an unobtrusive way that allows rapid retrieval of information.

Elmarie van Wyk, Hendra van Zyl and Gillian Staniland, who designed and constructed the site, are to be congratulated. This portal is worth many visits and many returns. It's great!

**Fred N Sanders**