



facilities were far better equipped to deal with tuberculosis than HIV/AIDS.

Shisana said she believed the Stats SA death notification figures were 'seriously under-reported', because stigma and insurance considerations contributed to the lack of AIDS-attributed deaths on certificates.

Two of the country's top health care union leaders, Nick Henwood and Fazeela Fayers, welcomed the HSRC

study. Henwood called for an urgent investigation into why health care workers did not have the confidence to report injuries like needle-sticks, in spite of supportive and enabling legislation. 'They tell us it's because of peer stigma, lack of medical confidence and the fear of losing their jobs,' he told conference delegates. He said the central issue was 'working towards a society where it is safe to declare your HIV status'. Fayers said she did not 'buy' the government's

argument of budgetary constraints.

A WHO study in the UK had shown that country to have a 10-year staffing plan and to spend 173 times more on staff than South Africa did.

Of those interviewed in the HSRC study 8.8% were medical practitioners and 48.3% nurses.

Chris Bateman

TELEMEDICINE BOOST FOR MATIE CAMPUS

A pioneering video-conferencing link between Tygerberg Campus and two rural health care hostels is enabling up to 30 University of Stellenbosch students at a time to enjoy top-quality on-site education while doing their primary health care rural rotations.

Jointly funded and equipped by the national Department of Health, the Medical Research Council and the private sector, the facility serves undergraduate and postgraduate students across all disciplines at the University's Faculty of Health Sciences.

According to Professor Helmuth Reuter, Director of the Ukwanda Centre for Rural Health that runs the project, it is the first time in South Africa that such facilities have been set up and made available to all health care disciplines on one campus.

The video-conferencing, set up in student hostels at Onrus near Hermanus (housing 9 students) and at Worcester (housing 20 students), aims to service 2 000 Matie health care undergraduates who'll spend between 1 and 5 weeks at a time there.

Reuter said it saved time, costs and reduced travel risks for both lecturers and students.

During their rotation, the students visit and work at municipal clinics, old-age homes, state hospitals and schools in the two districts and then jointly work-shop their experiences with one

another and anchor lecturers at Tygerberg.

All three sites could go 'on-line simultaneously', enabling a real-time learning environment.

Medical students spend 2 - 3 weeks at a time at either of these hostels and return there for a similar period for their late clinical rotation before completing their studies.



Professor Helmuth Reuter.

'To have a true community rotation backed up by high technology is totally new in this country. We've decided not to have a department of telemedicine (like the University of Natal). Instead we've formed the Ukwanda Centre for Rural Health and have chosen to have telemedicine drive its needs,' Reuter said.

Stellenbosch University Health Science schools that will be using the facilities will be Primary Public Health,

Pathology (Basic Sciences), Allied Health Sciences, Medicine and Oral Health.

Reuter said that the Ukwanda Centre was trying to develop something that could be extended and rolled out elsewhere.

He said the Ukwanda Centre was 'quite willing' to act as consultants to other campuses.

Asked why the facility was not being used in conjunction with other local universities, Reuter replied that he believed it was 'mainly a budgetary problem'.

However, he said some University of the Western Cape physiotherapy students were 'using some of our teaching tools', and this could in future include video-conferencing.

'This is all still relatively new (18 months in the development and setting up) — we'll probably only be fully functional from an IT and rotation point of view early next year,' he emphasised.

Accommodation for students was 'a major problem' and was being carefully addressed, he said.

'We're hoping to generate income by making the video-conferencing available to the private sector so that the entire project can be self-sustaining,' he added.

Chris Bateman