



On a community level, groundbreaking HIV work in Cape Town is revealing an 80% TB reduction rate in patients on ARV drugs.

UCT's HIV Research Unit headed by Professor Robin Wood has been employing Highly Active Antiretroviral Therapy (HAART) in various regimens with 400 patients since the late 1980s. They now have the largest natural history cohort in Africa and are currently reporting a decrease in hospitalisation and mortality of 80%-90%.

The Western Cape has the highest TB notification rate in the country and the 'Keep the Family Safe' project is being funded by the provincial government.

Using simplified drug regimens administered by well-trained nurses and health professionals, the first

operational site in the country was set up in Guguletu outside Cape Town in September last year.

The unit has added ARVs to nine existing clinics, enabling them to measure the incremental costs of these drugs versus all other costs.

Anglo: 'We're in constant negotiation with pharmaceuticals and labs – we offer a far cheaper service than anyone else.'

The next stage is to measure the impact on an entire informal settlement at Masiphumelele, a discrete small community near Kommetjie.

A key element of the UCT programme is a 'buddy system' used by

Siza Phila ('We will be healthy') NGO, in which an HIV-positive person acts as counsellor and mentor for up to 20 other patients.

Unlike Anglo's approach, Wood's teams target family units and encourage them to accept the member living with HIV, which helps with compliance. 'They learn to take hold of the disease themselves,' Wood says.

He said of the August AIDS conference that 'there's a great inequality of expertise throughout the country. If we get finance from abroad, we need to help each other a lot and set up appropriate initiatives. With all our challenges, we don't need to reinvent the wheel'.

Chris Bateman

DOCTORS BRING HOME BRONZE IN CAPE-TO-RIO RACE

In an impressive time of 24 days, 2 hours and 16 minutes, the relieved and exhausted doctors aboard the yacht Investec docked in Rio de Janeiro harbour on 2 February.

On handicap in Class A, they had proudly achieved third position. Trying sailing conditions had meant this was slightly slower than expected. Crewmember Dr Geoff Fotheringham, told the SAMJ onboard shortly before Investec set sail from Cape Town on 11 January, that they anticipated they were in with a 'fighting chance' for handicap honours if they completed the journey between 19 and 21 days.

The seven-member crew was skippered by Sean Cummings, a professional yachtsman and instructor at the Cape Ocean Sailing Academy and considerably assisted by the 20 years of experience of ex-Springbok sailor, Mark Saddler.

The other five crewmembers were surgeons John Robbs (who had initiated the project), Geoff Fotheringham and Ray Dawson, anaesthetist Iain Gibson, and ophthalmologist Trevor Carmichael.

Along for the ride was Bephu the Bear, the fundraising mascot and symbol of hope and adventure for children living with HIV/AIDS and those orphaned by the disease.

Bephu has travelled to the South Pole, into space with Mark Shuttleworth and run the Comrades with Bruce Fordyce. There are of course several actual teddybears and the Cape to

Rio sailor was a small waterproof model that could be secured to the rigging to keep the helmsman company on every watch.

Investec was not the first boat to be manned by a largely medical crew, as the SAMJ mistakenly asserted in its January edition. That honour had previously gone to four doctors who competed in the 1976 race.

'Rio Springbok' was skippered and co-owned by Cape Town GP and previous vice-commodore of the Royal Cape Yacht Club, Dr CPvan der Merwe. The other co-owner was Wellington GP, Dr Manie Rust, and the other sailors were Cape Town ENT surgeon, Dr Erich Kushke, and Paarl GP, Dr Ati van der Leek. Only the skipper had any ocean-going experience.

The yacht was one of the smallest boats in the fleet of 130 boats. By comparison, in the 2003 race, only 32 boats took part, 22 of which made it to Rio by the cutoff on 5 February.

The 'medical Miura' was bought as a basic hull and built completely in CPvan der Merwe's home garden. There were no major sponsors so the two owners financed it personally.

Navigator Attie van der Leek said whistfully that 'the memories will be with me always. The ocean is vast; one's total dependence and relative insignificance within nature's surroundings is truly a lesson in humility and a most enriching opportunity'.

