

## Expanding Education and Pre-service Training to Improve HIV/AIDS Lab Services in Namibia

AIDS is the leading cause of death in Namibia, yet the nation's response to the epidemic is impeded by a severe shortage of qualified medical technologists who play a critical role in HIV care by informing decisions about ART and related treatment by providing CD4 counts, basic metabolic profiles, and other necessary diagnostics. Currently, there are only 160 medical technologists in the country and the infrastructure and expertise to train more lab professionals does not exist.



Members of a Twinning Center partnership launched in December 2007 with support from PEPFAR through the CDC are working to change this by establishing a new bachelor's degree program in medical technology.

The partnership links the Polytechnic of Namibia in Windhoek with the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) in Little Rock. Partners are working together to develop a nationally accredited curriculum for the medical technology program, along with related training materials. They are also focusing on faculty and organizational capacity development to ensure more effective administration, expansion, and sustainability of the new four-year degree program.



By offering ongoing in-service training courses like this one in May 2008, as well as pre-service education and training through the newly established bachelor's degree program, partners are helping Namibia develop a cadre of skilled medical technologists capable of supporting the provision of high quality treatment and care to people living with HIV.

In addition to the pre-service training program, partners have also launched a continuing education program designed to strengthen the skills of practicing scientists. The Polytechnic delivered the

first course May 29, 2008. Some 55 people attended the training, which was held at the US Embassy's American Cultural Center in Windhoek.

Participants learned about the laboratory's role in the timely diagnosis of TB, as well as key elements of an effective quality control/quality assurance program for a tuberculosis lab. UAMS partner Dr. Kathleen D. Eisenbach presented a lecture on "Tuberculosis Diagnostics for the Rollout of Antiretroviral Treatment in the HIV/AIDS Epidemic" remotely from Arkansas.

A second continuing education workshop held August 5, 2008 at the Polytechnic was presented by UAMS partner Dr. Talmadge Holmes. Nearly 60 people attended his lecture on "Integration of Laboratory, Emergency Care Services, Infection Control, and Quality Assurance in HIV/AIDS Care."