



American International Health Alliance
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AIHA Country Snapshot: Namibia

FALL 2011

AIHA PARTNERSHIPS IN NAMIBIA

- Polytechnic of Namibia /
University of Arkansas for
Medical Sciences
(Bio-medical Sciences)

HIV/AIDS Twinning Center Partnerships in Namibia

Namibia has an HIV prevalence rate of 13.1 percent among individuals aged 15-49, with AIDS being the leading cause of death since 1996. With support from the US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and the United States Government team in country, the American International Health Alliance's HIV/AIDS Twinning Center currently manages one partnership in Namibia.

Supporting Bio-medical Science Training

Namibia's response to its HIV/AIDS epidemic has been hindered by a lack of qualified medical technologists, who play a crucial role in HIV care and treatment by informing decisions related to ART, as well as the diagnosis and treatment of opportunistic infections.

When AIHA began working in Namibia in December 2007, there were only 160 medical technologists in the country and the infrastructure and expertise to train more lab professionals did not exist. Members of a Twinning Center partnership have been working to change this by launching a new bachelor's degree program in medical technology. The CDC-funded partnership links the Polytechnic of Namibia in Windhoek with the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) in Little Rock. Drawing on UAMS's extensive experience training medical technologists and managing an effective medical technology program, partners are building the institutional and human resource capacity needed to effectively support Namibia's laboratory services.

Partnership objectives are to enhance the quality of medical diagnostics services in Namibia by increasing the number of medical technologists and strengthen the Polytechnic's capacity both to provide continuing education to practicing scientists and to deliver a medical technology curriculum in keeping with international standards.

Currently, 57 students are enrolled in the new called biomedical sciences program at the Polytechnic. Partners engage in periodic professional exchanges to provide guest lecturing, curriculum development, experiential learning opportunities, and ongoing faculty development to support the implementation of the new degree program. They also regularly conduct continuing education workshops for practicing healthcare providers. These workshops have been approved by the Namibia Health Professions Council as accredited continuing education units for health workers. In June 2011, partners opened a Learning Resource Center (LRC) at the Polytechnic to improve access to evidence-based clinical resources, including textbooks, practice standard reviews, case studies, and other up-to-date information.

In the coming year, partners will work closely with experts from the Cochrane Collaborating Center in South Africa to expand their efforts to improve use of evidence-based practices through the LRC. This will include procuring additional resources and advanced training and mentoring, as well as sensitization and information literacy training for the Polytechnic's faculty, staff, students, and other stakeholders.

CONTACT US

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AIHA/DC

The HIV/AIDS Twinning Center

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