



DFID MSP PROJECTS: STRENGTHENING PALLIATIVE CARE

Project title: Building the foundations for providing a national palliative care service.

Service Provider: Wits Palliative Care

Partners: Gauteng and Mpumalanga Departments of Health

Aim

The project aimed to remedy the inadequacies of palliative care services in the public sector in several ways. These included:

- the development of a centre of excellence for palliative care;
- expanded urban service delivery;
- the introduction of a rural service delivery framework;
- development of palliative care policies and guidelines; and
- advocacy campaigns to support access to palliative care in the public sector.

Project description

A newly-renovated Gauteng Centre of Excellence for Palliative Care was opened at the Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital in Soweto. This will play an important role in providing a pain-free journey for people with terminal illnesses, including AIDS¹. The centre, which was opened in August 2008, will run and test pilots and models in palliative care.

The project also contributed to strengthening palliative care outreach services in Gauteng, providing around 6,000 consultations a year in Soweto, Diepsloot and Johannesburg. A pilot service in a rural part of Mpumalanga was established with the support of the provincial ministry of health. Health workers were trained and a mentorship programme with Wits Palliative care was established. Urban and rural service delivery models were also evaluated for cost-effectiveness and effectiveness.

The project played an active role in developing palliative care guidelines for policy discussion and meetings were held with the NDOH. Project staff participated in parliamentary hearings on palliative care and in high-level discussions on nurse prescribing.

Lessons learned and dissemination of information was done through a variety of media and communication channels, such as workshop and conference presentations, publications and posters.

The project has supported the only clinically attached and assessed palliative care programme in Southern Africa and more than 560 doctors were trained (up to June 2008). The project also secured the commitment from Wits University to support teaching and research related to palliative care and in the faculty of Health Sciences.

¹ According to Wits Palliative Care at least 370,290 people suffered a painful death in 2005.

Conclusion

Apart from directly improving palliative care services, the project contributed to greater government commitment to this important service, and the recognition that palliative care is a human right. In Gauteng this was reflected in the creation of 18 permanent posts, improved access to drugs and provision of facilities, infrastructure and management support. Palliative care nurses, previously funded by donors, are now paid by government. The project is also encouraging other provincial governments to fund palliative care posts.