

International AIDS Candlelight Memorial Day



Staff, students and guests from the health sector gathered to pay tribute to victims of the HIV/AIDS pandemic at the International AIDS Candlelight Memorial. The event was attended by (from left) Nonhlanhla Makhanya, Head of Ministry at the KZN Department Health; Naseem Haniff, Director of Student Counselling; Thobile Zulu, HIV/AIDS Centre Co-ordinator and Amar Singh, Dean of Students

Photographer: Dumile Mbatha

19 May marked the 27th Anniversary of the International AIDS Candlelight Memorial Day and this year's message was "Many Lights for Human Rights". To commemorate the many lives lost to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, globally, DUT held a candle lighting ceremony at Mansfield Hall, Ritson campus.

The event was co-ordinated by DUT's HIV/AIDS Centre and aimed to educate and create greater awareness amongst the university community. The centre distributed pamphlets on available services, contraception and barrier methods. Students and staff were also encouraged to undergo Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT). The ceremony was opened with a prayer from Lihlohonolo Makhohlouloane, DUT's Safety, Health and Environmental Officer.

David Sedumedi, Programme Director, said the idea to commemorate the lives lost to HIV/AIDS came from Bobbi Campbell, Bobby Reynolds, Dan Turner and Mark Feldman, in 1983. "The Candlelight Memorial began in 1983 during a time of confusion and misconception about a mysterious disease sweeping the global population. These gentlemen started by lighting candles and since then it has been celebrated annually by the global community," said Sedumedi.

"The Candlelight Memorial Day is more than a ceremony; it is an opportunity to reflect on what we have done in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Globally there are close to 33 million people that are living with HIV. DUT's HIV/AIDS Centre is commended for its commitment to empowering and educating students about HIV/AIDS to prevent further spread of the virus. The centre's application to begin roll out of Anti-Retro Virals (ARV) to students was recently approved, previously students were referred to other centres for ARVs, however they will now be available at the university ", said Amar Singh, Dean of Students.

Representing the MEC for Health, Nonhlanhla Makhanya, Head of Ministry at the KZN Department Health said society needs to work together to fight the spread of the disease and empower each other to know their HIV status. She said: "We need stop and prevent further discrimination of people living with HIV. Together we are the solution." The ceremony ended with a poetry recital by Thobeka Dodo and an entertaining performance by DUT's Drama Society.



Health Sciences

Students host HIV/AIDS Presentations

Ntokozo Zondo

The Faculty of Health Sciences' Chiropractic and Homeopathy departments recently hosted academic presentations on HIV/AIDS addressing student concerns on the spread of the virus, treatment and research.

Basic Medical Sciences lecturer, Feroza Haffejee said students were divided into working groups and given topics relating to HIV/AIDS. The presentations focused on an integrated approach on how the spread of HIV could be prevented using barrier methods during sexual intercourse.

Other presentations highlighted the importance of barrier methods, consistent condom use to prevent the spread of HIV, unwanted pregnancies, and how to identify sexually transmitted infections and available treatment. This HIV/AIDS session was the first of its kind for the Basic Medical Science students and proved that DUT is capable of incorporating HIV/AIDS into its academic curriculum.

Students were also tasked with collating global, continental, national and regional statistics, revealing to their peers the need for greater precautions as KwaZulu-Natal remains the province with the highest prevalence rate in South Africa. The Treatment Research team was tasked to inform their peers about current available treatments for people living with HIV/AIDS. A diagrammatic presentation was used to explain the life cycle of the virus in conjunction with how Anti-Retro Viral drugs work.

Working together to fight HIV

Zett KaMasondo Malaza

“Your future is determined by the choices you make, be yourself and stay on the safe side,” these are the words of DUT Peer Educator and Environmental Health undergraduate, Slindile Madondo.

Madondo is passionate about her role in positively influencing people's lives and enjoys putting a smile on the face of others through her social work as a peer educator. She said people have often questioned her motives for being a Peer Educator and many have assumed that she either enjoys drawing attention to herself or is HIV positive. “Let's face facts, everybody is affected by HIV. We are all aware of individuals who are either living with the virus or who have lost a loved one to the disease. In celebrating our HIV negative status, let us help those who are HIV positive. Let's help them realize being HIV positive is not the end of the world and life beyond HIV does exist. Together we can educate each other on safe sexual practices.”

She said the role of peer educators is focused on positively influencing attitude change through an informal approach. “We are here to help motivate behaviour change, here when you may need a shoulder to cry on and a friend to confide in. Peer educators are also students who are faced with the same issues facing the rest of the youth population. Collective efforts from students to understand challenges facing youth, including drug abuse and teenage pregnancy will result in positive solutions.”

Madondo went on to say “I was inspired by the words of Environmental Health lecturer, Joy Kistnasamy who often says: 'People don't care how much you know, but will like to know how much you care'. As a student, I believe in faith and a better future. Lets give faith a fighting chance by uniting and working towards solutions and a better future. Imagine an HIV free South Africa... it begins with you.”

Peer educators are based at all campuses, with ongoing HIV awareness events at all DUT campuses and student residences. For free confidential consultations, visit the HIV/AIDS Centre at Open House on Steve Biko Road.



Male Circumcision Workshop



HIV/AIDS Counsellor, Nontobeko Buthelezi, with students who attended the Male Circumcision Workshop

Photographer: Mbalenhle Mohlakoana

The Society for Family Health (SFH) hosted a Male Circumcision Workshop at Pietermaritzburg Campus's Indumiso site on 11 September. The workshop was attended by 50 male students who were informed about the advantages of being circumcised and the procedure involved. Students were also given the opportunity to raise concerns and make bookings to undergo the surgical procedure. To minimise the backlog of bookings, the HIV/AIDS Centre will continue to make SFH bookings. For more information, visit the centre or contact HIV Information Officer, Mbali Mohlakoana on 033 845 8976.

Pietermaritzburg Condom and STI Week

The HIV/AIDS Centre celebrated the awareness of STIs and the use of contraceptives at the Pietermaritzburg Condom and STI Week, which was held in February. At the Indumiso site library, information desks were set up with pamphlets to educate students about different barriers methods available and emphasized the importance of responsible sexual behaviour. The initiative was followed by a 'Know Your Status' campaign where students were addressed by NGO, New Start, at a mass rally to promote HIV/AIDS testing. The first 20 students who underwent voluntary testing received sponsored T-Shirts.

