



**Press Statement, 22 September 2010**

## **Dr Mabatho Kekana awarded the 2010 RuDASA Rural Doctor of the Year award**

The annual RuDASA (Rural Doctor's Association of Southern Africa) conference was held in Swaziland 26-28 August 2010, the first time hosted by a Southern African country. Two hundred and sixty delegates met in Ezulwini Valley, with delegates attending from South Africa, Swaziland, Mozambique, Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Malawi, America, Spain, United Kingdom and Switzerland, and foreign qualified doctors from Cuba and Tunisia.

At the annual RuDASA conference the Pierre Jaques Rural Doctor of the Year award is made. Since 2002 RuDASA inaugurates this award annually to a rural doctor, working at the coal face, who is recognised by the RuDASA Committee to have made a significant contribution towards rural health in the previous year. It is intended to be awarded to a practicing rural doctor rather than to someone who has made achievements in the academic arena. It is also awarded for a specific contribution within the previous year rather than for long service. The nature of the contribution is not defined given the great variety of work and activities of rural doctors.

The award was named after Dr Pierre Jaques, a founder member of RuDASA and a doyen of rural practice in South Africa.

### **Rural Doctor of the Year: 2010**

We are proud to announce the recipient of the 2010 Rural Doctor of the Year award as **Dr Mabatho Kekana**, who is also the first female to receive this award.



Dr Karl Le Roux, RuDASA Chairperson with Rural Doctor of the Year 2010, Dr Mabatho Kekana

Dr Kekana obtained a BSc from the University of Zululand, and then proceeded to MEDUNSA for her MBChB. She completed her internship at Tembisa hospital and then worked in private practice until 1994. After moving to Nelspruit she worked at Themba hospital for 6 years. After a brief job with the

Medical Bureau for Occupational diseases in Braamfontein she moved to Cape Town, where she worked in the Gugulethu day hospital and what is now named the Desmond Tutu Centre. In August 2006 she joined the staff at Hlabisa Hospital in UmKhanyakude district, KZN. She became more involved in the management of the hospital in 2008. Under her leadership over the last 18 months the hospital has changed from a chronically understaffed rural hospital, to one of the stronger hospitals in the district, which is able to offer assistance to other less staffed hospitals in the district. The hospital now has a stable core of 13 doctors, the best situation in the last 10 years. She states that she wants to make Hlabisa “the hospital of choice” and to continue to make improvements.

### **Life-long Service Award and Certificates of Merit**

A number of other awards were also made: Life-long service award to Dr Jon Larsen, who worked as an Obstetrician in Eshowe and has now retired to Howick. A certificate of merit was awarded for teamwork and empowering primary health care nurses in the Antiretroviral programme to Dr Madeleine Muller from the Eastern Cape; and a certificate of merit to Dr Ockert van Heerden for dedication in serving in the Central Karoo district since 1994.



Doctor Kekana and Dr Muller are congratulated by Department of Health Officials of the Kingdom of Swaziland.

### **Previous awards**

The first recipient of the award, in 2002, was Dr Thys von Mollendorf, previously medical superintendent of Rob Ferreira Hospital in Nelspruit, Mpumalanga. Subsequent recipients of the award have been as follows:

- 2003: Dr Victor Fredlund, from Mseleni Hospital in northern KwaZuluNatal
- 2004: Dr Hermann Reuter, from MSF in Lusikisiki in the Eastern Cape
- 2005: Dr Nigel Hoffman from Rietvlei Hospital in the Eastern Cape
- 2006: Dr Vanga Siwisa from Taung, North West Province
- 2007: Dr Gert Marincowitz from Tzaneen, Limpopo Province
- 2008: Dr Munyadziwa Kwindu, from Donald Fraser Hospital, Limpopo Province
- 2009: Dr JJ Ongole from Piet Retief Hospital, Mpumalanga

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