

## PRESS RELEASE-FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

# Wits Division of Rural Health launches first Rural Health Career Day

3 March 2010

The first Rural Health Career Day in North West Province will take place on Friday the 5<sup>th</sup> of March 2010 in Mafikeng. While shortages of health care professionals are a national problem, rural areas are disproportionately affected. North West is the province with the lowest doctor to patient ratio in the country. International evidence has shown that one strategy to increase human resources for health in rural areas is to recruit medical students of a rural origin.

Therefore, the Wits Division of Rural Health in partnership with the North West Departments of Health and Education has taken the initiative to organize a Rural Health Career Day to create awareness and enthusiasm among rural learners in North West with regards to choosing a medical career. Integrated into the career day will be a health promotion component. The initiative forms part of the Division's social responsibility plan to empower students from the communities involved in terms of future career options and lifestyle choices.

The career day is offered to grade 12 learners based in the Ngaka Modiri Molema district. Final year medical students based in North West together with senior students from the other major departments in the faculty (pharmacy, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, dentistry, clinical associates, physiology), will facilitate activities in the form of a series of mini-workshops on career options focusing on programmes offered by the faculty, as well as on teenage pregnancy, substance abuse, sexually transmitted infections and other topics that are relevant to young people.

About 300 grade 12 learners from 80 schools are expected to attend this first career day of its kind. It follows the recent launch of another partnership initiative between the Wits Centre for Rural Health and the North West Department of Health: The grant-awarded development of a District Education Campus at Lehurutse Hospital Complex in Zeerust, North West Province. Choosing a medical career is further facilitated by the North West Department of Health bursary scheme and the Wits WIRHE Scholarship for rural students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

North West Province is becoming a beacon of hope for rural health improvements and an example for other provinces to follow.

A partnership between:

For more information on the Career Day and WIRHE, contact:

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