

foreword

South African Health Review

Since its first publication ten years ago, the South African Health Review has been widely recognised as a key reference to developments in South African health policy and service delivery. It has documented achievements in the provision of high quality, equitable health care, and has highlighted challenges and gaps which remain in translating policy into action. Human resource shortfalls in public health facilities have repeatedly been identified as a critical factor undermining health system development. For this reason, this tenth edition of the Review has been given the theme 'Human Resources for Health'.

It is intended that review of developments in this regard will contribute to current national discussion on measures to reverse human resource shortages, at a time when this is receiving high priority in government. President Mbeki, in his State of the Nation address in February 2005, said, "We need massively to improve the management, organisational, technical and other capacities of government so that it meets its objectives." The launch by the Minister of Health of the "Human Resources for Health Strategic Framework" in August follows statements in her 2005 budget speech that "the single most critical resource in our ability to deliver on our health objectives is the availability and capacity of health personnel. Various interventions are being made to address particularly the supply and distribution of health personnel in the country and mitigate the impact of outwards migration of health skills."

The Review discusses many causes of human resource shortages in the public health sector, including the migration of scarce skilled professionals and the rising burden of disease due to HIV and AIDS. Also discussed are actions, both within and beyond the health sector, which are required to respond to this issue with the involvement of international stakeholders, such as the United Nations and World Health Organization, and local stakeholders, including various government departments, the private sector and civil society institutions.

Many other areas of health sector development also come under the spotlight of the Review. These include the private sector, implementation of the new Health Act, and progress and challenges in confronting the HIV and AIDS epidemic. In each of these areas, the Review is intended not only as an informational resource but as a source of critical input and constructive recommendations for decision makers throughout the health sector.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees of Health Systems Trust, I would like to commend the efforts of everyone who contributed to production of this Review. In particular, our appreciation goes to the authors, peer-reviewers, the SAHR Advisory Committee, the national and provincial Departments of Health, the Press Gang, McCord's Hospital, the cover photographer, and the entire Health Systems Trust staff.



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Chairperson: Board of Trustees