

Department of Health sends 30 students to India to study Pharmacy, Ultrasonography

MEDIA RELEASE

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In yet another bold step to fight the quadruple burden of diseases, the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health is sending 30 young people to the Manipal University in Jaipur, India, to study towards a B Pharm (Pharmaceutical) degree and a BSc degree in Medical Imaging Technology.

South Africa in general and the Province of KwaZulu-Natal in particular - which has been labelled as the epicentre of HIV and Aids, including TB - has also drawn praise world-wide for its efforts to fight these scourges, including the reduction of mother-to-child transmission of the virus.

During his State of the Province speech in June 2014, the KwaZulu-Natal Premier, Mr Senzo Mchunu re-affirmed a commitment to build a healthier nation, with programmes to strengthen the fight against the spread of TB, HIV and Aids.

This massive investment of sending students to India by the Province of KwaZulu-Natal follows other ground-breaking initiatives to bolster its human resource capacity to provide the best public healthcare possible. These include:

- The offering of R200 million worth of bursaries for qualifying matriculants to study in a variety of medical disciplines within the country and abroad such as Medicine, Pharmacy, Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Speech Therapy, Oral Hygiene, Radiography (Diagnostic and Ultrasound), among others.

To respond to the shortage of doctors, particularly in the rural areas, which is a provincial and national problem, South Africa embarked on the Cuban Medical Training Programme, which has had the following success:

- 85 students have completed their studies, and have been placed at Institutions across the Province, either for Internship, Community Service or Work Back Obligation.
- KZN currently has 702 students studying in Cuba and in September 2014; the Province will be sending another batch of 100.
- This year, 10 of our students are returning to South Africa to commence final year training in the country for a period of 18 months.
- The Department has also formed a partnership with the Durban University of Technology which has led to the establishment of a programme which will annually see 30 bursary-sponsored students - who meet the programme's selection criteria - being enrolled to study towards a Bachelor of Health Sciences in Medical Orthotics and Prosthetics (MOP). The training of students in B Pharm and BSc Medical Imaging Technology in India as a result of discussions held at provincial and national level. The Department decided to focus on the manufacturing side of Pharmaceuticals, in response to the identified need. This would assist in achieving the country's objective of being able to produce pharmaceuticals cost-effectively, hence making it more affordable for the public health sector. At least R20 million in costs for the students' tuition, accommodation and sustenance will be shared by the Department and private sponsors. The students, most of whom come from impoverished backgrounds and thus could not secure a university education, have been recruited from the length and breadth of the province; from Mzimkhulu and Port Shepstone to Newcastle, Dundee, Pietermaritzburg, Empangeni, Paulpietersburg, KwaHlabisa, Phoenix and various parts of Durban. There were a total of thirty (30) seats available to the Province, which is made up as follows:
 - 15 seats for the B Pharm (General Stream) degree
 - 5 seats for the B Pharm (Manufacturing Stream) degree
 - 10 seats for the B Sc Medical Imaging Technology (ultrasonography) degree

Having secured the seats, an offer was made by external partners (private sector) to provide a full sponsorship for the 30 students, inclusive of all flights, accommodation, tuition fees, study material, medical care and allowances.

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