

FROM THE EDITOR



AT LONG LAST . . .

The government has commenced its long-awaited antiretroviral (ARV) roll-out, which sadly appears to be faltering amid accusations that the pharmaceutical industry is not able to provide sufficient stock timeously and the industry responding that they need 12 weeks to import and distribute ARVs.

With many changes within the AIDS Directorate Management structure, the National Guidelines were not yet available at the time of going to print in anything but draft format, with the Directorate saying that the paediatric section is still under discussion. The same department has not yet been able to furnish the Southern African HIV Clinicians Society with a full list of sites at which the roll-out has begun (i.e. at which ARV stock is available and voluntary counselling and testing (VCT) and prescribing has commenced).

The Society, the largest of the South African Medical Association (SAMA) special interest groups (with nearly 7 000 members), has offered and continues to offer its expert assistance in a number of aspects of the roll-out, utilising its well-established Society initiatives by:

- Including the National Guidelines and other Department of Health (DoH) training and guidance missives in the *Southern African Journal of HIV Medicine*.
- Increasing the print run of the journal to include all roll-out site doctors and senior professional nurses, provided that names and addresses are supplied and a

little financial assistance is proffered to cover the costs of the additional journals. This would certainly be more cost-effective for the AIDS Directorate/DoH than sending out *ad hoc* mailings.

- Including DoH schedules of meetings regarding the roll-out, by advertising them in the Society newsletter, *Transcript*.
- Setting up a 24-hour helpline for doctors and professional nurses running the roll-out sites, by utilising the Society's recognised HIV experts to man the consultancy lines in 6-hour sessions. This real-time, telephonic service would form a learning opportunity for doctors and nurses at even the most rural of sites, which are long distances from consultants of any sort.
- Organising the Foundation for Professional Development/Southern African HIV Clinicians Society HIV Management Course at all sites, beginning with those at which roll-out has begun.

The current issue features the use of ARVs in the presence of tuberculosis and shares the experiences of HIV programmes in various countries in resource-poor settings similar to our own.

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The AIDS ribbon 'with a twist' – upside down to symbolise a 'V' for 'vaccines' and the 'vision' of a world without AIDS (p. 42).