

National Department of Health creates a new Chief Directorate



For several years, there has been an ongoing discussion on the need to place Nutrition and Dietetics on a more senior level within the Department's of Health's management structure. This would enable the current Directorate of Nutrition to attain more direct representation with regard to the many and significant priorities in Nutrition and

Dietetics in the country. The recent creation of the new Chief Directorate: Health Promotion and Nutrition has addressed this long-awaited development. The *SAJCN* wishes to congratulate Ms Moeng Mahlangu on her new appointment. Ms Moeng Mahlangu holds a Master's degree in Dietetics, has amassed vast experience in the field of community nutrition development and engagement, and explains: "As part of the South African government's 12 outcomes, the health sector has a mandate of improving the health status of the entire population and to contribute to government's vision of "a

long and healthy life for all South Africans". The National Department of Health's Strategic plan for the period 2009-2014 lists 10 priorities as part of the 10- point plan for the overall improvement of the performance of the national health system. One of these priorities is the mass mobilisation of communities and key stakeholders to promote better health outcomes for everybody.

The findings in the recent South African National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (SANHANES)-1 2012 report have re-emphasised the need to strengthen preventive services at community and household level. This responsibility cannot be taken lightly. Further success of the programme will depend on involvement and partnerships with key players. The primary healthcare reengineering process has already laid a strong foundation for an improvement to the health of South Africans through the involvement of communities, while the need to implement evidence-based interventions to guide programming is of paramount importance. These are exciting times for Nutrition and Dietetics in the country, and the development of the new Chief Directorate into a credible and effective entity to address national priorities in Nutrition and Dietetics, and improve the nutritional status of all South Africans, with the support of all stakeholders, is a much-needed and most welcome challenge.

The new BSc Dietetics programme at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University

A Smith and A Gresse



The new BSc Dietetics programme commenced at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU) in Port Elizabeth in February 2013 with an intake of first-year students. The initial intake of students derived mainly from the Eastern Cape. Some of the students have already obtained BSc degrees in other fields, while others matriculated last year. Three students from America, and one from Sweden, are also following the nutrition modules of the programme.

This is the only programme of its kind in the Eastern Cape province. This province is known for a high prevalence of malnutrition and has a limited number of qualified and registered dietitians thinly distributed across the vast province. State hospitals have limited

dietetic services and services from dietitians in community and wellness clinics are even more sparse. There are also few dietitians in private practice in the province. A number of private hospitals and/or state-funded hospitals have no dietetic services at all. Therefore, the new BSc Dietetics programme will assist in alleviating the skills shortage in the province and should help to provide better nutrition care services. With the assistance of the NMMU, hospital facilities have been made available in order to ensure a high and appropriate standard of training.

The new programme will provide easier and more affordable access to aspiring students in the province. The Dietetics Department is part of the School of Lifestyle Sciences in the Faculty of Health Sciences. The School of Lifestyle Sciences will soon be housed in a new building with the necessary facilities for training and research for future dietitians. The building will include a state-of-the-art training kitchen suitable for training that pertains to small-scale food preparation, preparation for therapeutic diets and food preparation for large-scale industrial food service provision.

For further information on the programme, please contact Dr Gresse at dietetics@nmmu.ac.za