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LILLY MDR-TB PARTNERSHIP AND RED CROSS ANNOUNCE TB MEDIA AWARD WINNERS!

The Lilly MDR-TB Partnership and the South African Red Cross Society today announced the winners of the 2010 Lilly MDR-TB Partnership / Red Cross Annual TB Media Award.

This award, being held for the first time this year, recognises outstanding print and online journalism and honours journalists who serve their readers by providing responsible, accurate and timely information on tuberculosis prevention, research, development and treatment.

First place was awarded to a combined feature article which appeared in Pulse and Health 24 in Summer 2008/2009, written by Olivia Rose-Innes and Ilse Salzwedel. This article entitled "You too could have TB" explored the ever present risk all South Africans have when it comes to becoming infected with TB.

In their entry justification, Rose-Innes and Salzwedel said that their aim was to give readers a wakeup call to the fact that TB is every South African's problem. "The chances are high that any one of us may harbor the bacterium. Any South African, of any socio-economic background and ethnicity, can become ill with this serious disease".

Read this article on Health 24 at http://www.health24.com/you_pulse/Pulse_6/3937-4288,48881.asp

The judging panel unanimously agreed that the winning entry met many of the various judging criteria which included news value, relevance, ability to stimulate awareness about TB prevention and treatment, significance of the information presented, presentation of new data, research and treatments, clarity and accuracy in describing the science behind the story, effectiveness in communicating the story and creative journalistic approach.

Rose-Innes and Salzwedel win R 20 000.00 for their winning entry.

Judges included Dr Norbert Ndjeka – Director of Drug Resistant -TB at the National Department of Health, Tintswalo Shikwambane - Lilly MDR-TB Project Manager, Gerry Elsdon – Media personality and Global TB Advocate for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Kelvin Glen – Communications, Fundraising and Marketing Manager for the South African Red Cross Society and award winning freelance journalist, Marion Scher.

Gerry Elsdon believes more should be done in terms of sharing information about TB, especially about the need for people to get tested. Gerry herself has successfully been cured from TB and is passionate about helping to educate South Africans about the disease.

"Involving the media in the fight against TB, and helping to equip them with the facts, is a huge step towards further educating South Africans. We can no longer be ashamed or afraid to speak and act. TB is killing people all over the world, it knows no borders, it does not discriminate and it is 100% curable," she says.

In second place was Anso Thom from Health-e News with her submission entitled "Treating Drug-Resistant TB at home"; and in third place was Chris Bateman from the South African Medical Journal with his article "Collaborative push to address TB crisis on mines".

Thom and Bateman win R 10 000 and R 5 000 respectively.

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that a third of the world's population is latently infected with tuberculosis (TB). It is estimated that of those with a latent TB infection, about 10% will go on to develop TB disease¹.

The WHO defines an incidence of 200 TB cases per 100 000 as an epidemic. The national rate in South Africa could be as high as 940 per 100 000. The pandemic in South Africa is being fuelled by the HIV epidemic².

The Lilly MDR-TB Partnership and South African Red Cross Society hopes that as this award gains momentum going forward, more journalists in South Africa will pay more attention to the real stories about tuberculosis, and in so doing, better inform various individuals about this generally under reported disease which affects millions of South Africans.

The Lilly MDR-TB Partnership and the South African Red Cross Society are hoping to be able to open these awards to broadcast journalists in addition to print and online media in the future.

Ends

Notes for journalists:

THE LILLY MDR-TB PARTNERSHIP

The Lilly MDR-TB Partnership is a public-private initiative led by Eli Lilly and Company to address the expanding crisis of Multi-Drug-Resistant Tuberculosis (MDR-TB) – a disease that afflicts millions of people in some of the poorest regions of the world.

Our partnership takes an innovative approach, drawing on a large group of over 18 global public and private organisations, to bring a comprehensive range of resources, expertise and services, to fight against MDR-TB - in ways that are tailored to local circumstances and needs on the ground. The Lilly MDR-TB Partnership exists to save lives by preventing and treating Multi-Drug Resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB).

The partnership is pursuing a comprehensive strategy to fight MDR-TB by providing access to medicines, transferring manufacturing technology, training healthcare workers, raising awareness of the disease and providing resources for prevention, diagnosis and treatment to people living with MDR-TB.

THE SOUTH AFRICAN RED CROSS SOCIETY (SARCS)

The South African Red Cross Society (SARCS) was founded in 1921 with the amalgamation of the various Red Cross entities present in the country. It was recognised by the International Committee of the Red Cross in 1928 and admitted into the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in 1929. Today we have 137 local committees across 37 branches throughout South Africa.

Our National Society, one of 187 members of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, has been in service in this country since 1897, and has evolved over the years, to become a democratic humanitarian actor.

Our areas of specialization are in preventive Health Care, Disaster Management, First Aid Training and Humanitarian Values. With the effects of climatic changes worldwide, the impact of natural disasters and the escalation of community needs, we have found ourselves needing to broaden our services, to reach more vulnerable people, while maintaining a high level of humanitarian service delivery.

Over the years, the work of the Red Cross in South Africa has changed to reflect the environment in which it is working. This means that much of the focus of today's work is related to health issues, particularly the devastating impact that HIV/AIDS and MDR – TB is having in South Africa. SARCS is also involved in empowering communities to cope in times of natural or man-made disasters. Drought, floods, veiled fires and mining disasters occur on a regular basis, but new areas of concern relate to the impact of rapid urbanisation, environmental degradation, and technological failure which has recently seen the eruption of urban violence that displaced over 70 000 people throughout the country.

References:

1. What is TB? The tuberculosis survival project (<http://www.tbsurvivalproject.org/tuberculosis/whats-tb.html>). Website accessed on 01 March 2010.
2. TB Control Programme – Media Workshop by Bruce Margot, 25th July 2008