

In this issue...

Our newly appointed Kuruman Palliative Care Nursing Sister, donations of oxygen concentrators and spirometers, the contentious issue of land resettlement on an old asbestos mine, the visits of a deputy minister, the Human Rights commissioner and an asbestos attorney, the Neil White Bursary, and more. Read on...

Kuruman Palliative Care Nursing Sister

The Asbestos and Kgalagadi Relief Trusts have appointed Sr Phumelo Magabanyane as their Kuruman Palliative Care Nursing Sister. She is a highly experienced, dedicated and able health professional who was previously working in the provincial services. Her duties are to establish herself as the hospice in Kuruman, initially only serving sufferers of lung cancer and mesothelioma, providing them and their families with relief and support. The Trustees of both trusts recognized the need to go beyond compensation, and have funded her post out of their social projects budgets. She will work closely with all stakeholders in the greater Kuruman and Danielskuil areas.



Meeting of minds and stakeholders

The ART/KRT recently held a roundtable meeting with key stakeholders and interested parties at which attorneys Richard Spoor and Rohan Atherton spoke about the local and foreign experience in asbestos litigation and claims. The purpose of the meeting was to create greater awareness around the issues that face victims of asbestos exposure and to discuss ways in which relief for these individuals as well as those suffering from other occupational health diseases can be sought.

Richard Spoor is a leading South African occupational health and safety specialist attorney who was largely responsible for the creation of the both the ART and KRT, Rohan Atherton is an Australian personal injury lawyer with some 15 years experience in assisting people suffering from asbestos related disease in various countries. He is exploring the possibility of South African victims of asbestos to claim compensation from US and UK Trusts.

Donation of oxygen concentrators

4 oxygen concentrators were kindly donated to the Trusts by Swiss donors, facilitated by the Kgalagadi Relief Trust and Dr Markus Heitz. They are to be used by our Kuruman Sister for those patients under her care. They will help to alleviate the breathlessness experienced by victims of asbestos related disease.

Donation of spirometers

The ART has recently donated a number of spirometers to public hospitals in asbestos mining areas. Embhuleni Hospital near the old Msauli mine received their IQTeQ Spirometer in October 2006 and the recent request by Barberton Hospital (where the aerial cableway received asbestos from Bulembu mine in Swaziland) has also been approved.



Deputy Minister squares up to asbestos

On 19 February 2007 our Deputy Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism Ms. Rejoice Mabudafhasi travelled to Kgalagadi to personally assess the asbestos pollution. She undertook to vigorously pursue and address the problem of ongoing environmental exposure in the area. She appealed to NGOs and businesses for help in rehabilitating old mines and dumps, suggesting public private partnerships to assist provinces. For further information, visit <http://www.environment.gov.za/NewsMedia/MedStat/2007Feb21/20022007.html>.

By the end of the 2006/2007 financial year (28.2.2007) the Asbestos Relief Trust had paid out R97.4 million to claimants and the much younger Kgalagadi Relief Trust had paid out R6.2 million. The Trusts' websites contain more detail – visit www.asbestostrust.co.za

Certifications as at 28.2.2007 (ART and KRT combined)		
Number of claims adjudicated		10591
Percentage certified as compensable		25.70%
Mild – moderate non-malignant ARD	ARD1	21.30%
Severe non-malignant ARD	ARD2	2.80%
Lung Cancer	ARD3	0.30%
Mesothelioma	ARD4	1.40%

NEW on the Web
Some interesting research appeared in the medical journal The Lancet (10 March 2007) linking the amount of asbestos used by a country to their mesothelioma rates. Visit the International Ban Asbestos Secretariate (IBAS) website <http://www.ibas.btinternet.co.uk/>, and look under Literature Review for the full story.

Human Rights Commission's visit to Mafefe – the HRC's chairperson, Jody Kollapen, recently visited Mafefe in February. He stressed the need for short term intervention in respect of removing asbestos dumps and long term intervention in respect of compensation. See the report on the website: http://www.sabcnews.com/south_africa/health/0,2172,144595,00.html

The Trusts are highly concerned to hear of plans by the Limpopo Department of Local Government and Housing to establish an old asbestos mine and mine village Penge as a formal township. A recent report by Dr Steven Donohue, formerly of the Department of Community Health at the University of Limpopo, indicates that the site is highly polluted and unsuitable for habitation. We would urge the relevant authorities to reconsider this matter and halt all development plans. The greater the human and animal population size using the area, the greater the pollution and rates of future dread diseases will be. The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) has stated that the mine should be rehabilitated and alternative accommodation investigated. For more details, see <http://www.busrep.co.za/index.php?fSectionId=&fArticleId=3739818> has more.

Neil White Bursary Recipient : Dr J.T. Sekwayo (BSc, MBChB, University of Limpopo)
Dr Sekwayo practices in Kuruman and has been seeing claimants for the Asbestos Relief Trust since 2005 (and recently also for the Kgalagadi Relief Trust). Dr Sekwayo has been awarded the Neil White Bursary to undertake the Diploma in Occupational Health at the University of Cape Town in 2007-2008.

To comment or subscribe or unsubscribe from this newsletter, send an email to:
Sandy Tolosana <stolosan@cormack.uct.ac.za>
For more information about the Trusts, visit www.asbestostrust.co.za