

Prof Portal Africa = *Innovation and Collaboration*

South Africa has its own particular set of challenges facing the provision of adequate healthcare for all. We have an urgent need to train more healthcare professionals across the board, to update, upskill and refresh our registered personnel within the current budget and time constraints. The practice of medicine in its various disciplines is also a rapidly changing field. New protocols, changing guidelines and limited time has resulted in our present situation, where a large hospital will only afford to offer some training to 10-20 % of its work force in a budget year. So at no one time are you able to have your staff complement with the same understanding or familiar with the latest protocols and guidelines. So **how can we improve the quality of patient care?** We have to innovate, we have to do it differently! There simply is not enough time or budget to have enough staff trained in anyone year.

The Solution

The answer must be in a collaboration, mutually beneficial, where we share the knowledge and competencies, where personnel can learn at their own pace, at their own convenience, guided by their supervisors and overseen by Clinical Skills Facilitators. It is time for both private and public health to work together to pool resources.

There are national plans and strategies to achieve this, for example The National Health Insurance, The National Core Standards and Public-Private Partnerships. Together these initiatives must ensure quality of care. Improving skills and education will play an important part in this improvement of quality.

“Prof Portal Africa” provides an exciting answer to some of these massive challenges. These are not peculiar to South Africa. The same problems are facing the healthcare systems in Europe and Africa. This project is aimed at the introduction of **an innovative healthcare learning concept powered by learning technology, based on the extensive experience** with healthcare learning networks in the Netherlands.

The network is facilitated using PulseWeb® learning technology. PulseWeb is a web-based learning environment centered on individual learning processes in the context of the organization and the sector. The concept combines the different roles and interventions which are involved in effective development of skills. These functions can all be created, followed and reported.

This new concept has been introduced by a consortium of partners. The consortium now called **Prof Portal Africa**, consists of two South African parties, Professional Emergency Care and Cape Orange Intercultural Connections and Noordhoff Health in the Netherlands.

The Vision

We have a shared vision and are excited about the potential of making a massive difference in helping to standardize healthcare provider's skills and standards with this platform, with a growing range of modules built specifically to update and refresh healthcare providers on the latest standards and evidence based protocols. As well as providing a management tool that enables HR and management to keep track of what their staff know, and even more helpful – what they don't know. This information will help them plan the needed modules to fill the knowledge gaps and progressively develop their staff in an efficient way. Less time in the classroom and more time treating the patient! The platform has the added benefit of keeping track of CPD points for the staff and expiry dates of points. The system will flag the courses and CPD points about to expire and notify the staff member of this. All of this learning, assessment, including skills assessment and certification is all now done automatically and the result available for the candidate and supervisor to see.

The Pilot Project

While the funded pilot project is running, partners involved are not paying for the use of the platform, e-module development training, assistance with the design, graphics, and video production. The partners on the project at present are: Groote Schuur Hospital, Victoria Hospital, Paarl Hospital, Netcare N1 City Hospital, UCT Medical School, Western Cape College of Nursing – Worcester and the Provincial Ambulance EMS and Becton Dickinson Clinical team. These project partners have undergone training to enable them to develop modules to meet their own needs, these completed modules are added to the growing library of modules. In this way one facility develops a module that will benefit others and they in return benefit from modules developed by other facilities.

This sharing of knowledge and capacities will enhance the quality and efficiency of the industry and also will reduce the costs of training significantly.

Not only does this project increase the efficiency, it also establishes an educational infrastructure facilitating continuous learning in organizations as well as between organizations.

The Plan Prof Portal Africa

In order for this platform to be sustainable in the future we need it to have an attainable financial model that has to be kept cost effective for both private and government facilities. This financial model is still in development and we look forward to having a plan to share in the second quarter of 2015. At the end of this project a Healthcare Network will be fully operational in South Africa. Learning could take place on a computer, a tablet or smartphone. The network makes it possible for healthcare workers to continuously develop their skills through a web based learning environment. Healthcare organizations can initiate learning activities and can monitor the skills of their staff.

This project will contribute to solving the current problems faced by the South African healthcare sector by providing a proven method to support the increase of knowledge and skills. With the implementation of this new E-learning concept the consortium creates an inspiring environment in the South African Health Sector with continuous opportunity for improvement.

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