



chairman's Letter



DEAR STAKEHOLDER

I am delighted to introduce this the first Annual Report of the Aurum Institute for Health Research and the first Chairman's statement of affairs.

The Aurum Institute for Health Research holds a unique position in medical research and treatment in South Africa. It is an independent, private, not-for-profit public benefit organisation (PBO) dedicated to improving the health of people through improving the understanding and treatment of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and other epidemic diseases that beset our continent.

The magnitude of our present national health predicament and the desire to provide comprehensive open services has driven the move to become a PBO. Our new position allows us to provide our services to diverse groups and will enable us to attract the support, not only of our progenitor but other mining groups, large employer groups, foundations and other service and research organisations. The potential for Public Private Partnership development with national and provincial health authorities is also enhanced.

Aurum's independence compels us to focus on projects of importance and to deliver reliable, quality services and results.

AURUM TODAY AND TOMORROW

We have developed state-of-the-art treatment programs, research methods and management systems to ensure that as far as is humanly possible the best care is given at all times, at all our treatment and research sites. Our patients are our priority – their needs guide our research and treatment. We are careful to ensure that our ethics and patient-centred approach guide us at all times.

The calibre and devotion of our doctors and scientists and their staff working as teams are our strength. They strive for evidence-based solutions to all aspects of the epidemic diseases covered by our diverse programme of interests reported later in this volume. Their outputs are reported to our clients and, where appropriate, published in leading peer-reviewed journals.

Partner and collaborator networking is an important aspect of our approach to ensure a high quality of work, conservation of resources, avoidance of duplication and development of enduring positive relationships. The Institute collaborates with some of the world's leading treatment and research institutions such as the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, John Hopkins University, the World Health Organisation (WHO), Wits University, the University of KwaZulu-Natal, the Medical Research Council, SAAVI, HVTN, IAVI, CHAVI and others.

Additional benefits derived from these relationships are that Aurum is able to offer venues for senior research activities, supervision of theses and in return give our staff opportunities to teach and interact with their colleagues on a regular basis.

A major concern emanating from our work is the growing appreciation of the strain epidemic diseases have placed on the provision of healthcare in the country. This is compounded by:

- † the fact that the public health sector's excellent health policy, and the application of what should be a significant budget, is beset by management difficulties which have bedevilled delivery and standards of care and,
- † the private health sector's patent failure of actuarially based private healthcare systems to contain costs and maintain benefits or expand the covered patient base.

We will channel some of our research capacity to investigate and thereby seek solutions to the rising cost of healthcare, reduced access to care and referral, and the shifts in the delivery capacity between the public and private health care sectors.

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In 2005, our health economics unit's capacity was substantially increased. Dr Charles Hongoro leads a staff of health economists who look at each of our own programmes and contextualise them into the economics and expectations of the region. They also comprehensively benchmark the economic outcomes of our health programmes to international standards and report on them to clients and researchers alike. We are convinced that this approach can be expanded to research in other areas of health delivery, structure and policy.

Aurum's HIV treatment and management programme, headed by Dr Salome Charalambous, has an important synergistic relationship with the Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital and Dr Alan Karstaedt's HIV/AIDS unit. This relationship has been forged to greatly magnify the capacity and treatment services we deliver jointly to HIV/AIDS patients. The Institute plans to add a full time clinical specialist to its staff to supervise and expand our clinical activities.

The Thibela TB programme, where initial delays were inevitable to ensure comprehensive stakeholder engagement, is now in full swing under the stewardship of Dr Leonie Opperman. This multi centre programme holds the promise of significantly changing the face of TB management in future.

In the context of Aurum's HIV vaccine research and treatment initiatives in the Matlosana district of the North West Province, I am particularly pleased to note the ground breaking work that has been done to prepare the surrounding communities for the challenges of studying the only viable prevention solution to the HIV/AIDS scourge. Community participation is key to our success in attaining our goal of improving health, and Dr's Surita Roux and Carol Metcalf and their teams are to be commended for their achievements in this important arena.

The development of the Aurum Institute interactive web portal with its information and help emphasis will provide instant and private access to people wanting to find out more about us and the diseases we treat.

There is exciting new work on TB drugs, microbicides, silicosis and imaging planned for 2006 and beyond.



Strategy and governance: We will build on the international reputation of Professor Gavin Churchyard and his team. The Institute will invest in a senior research scientist to further complement the team and increase its capacities and scope of work early in 2006.

A new Board of Directors has been constituted to give a wide and influential representation to our various stakeholders and interest groups. A key aspect of the Board's diverse tasks is to ensure the sound stewardship of the projects and lives entrusted to Aurum. I take this moment to thank all new Board members for joining us and assisting our cause.

Our scientific advisory committee regularly reviews all our research and treatment activities to safeguard the care and research we do. We are indebted to the committed scientists who comment, question and guide us in the development of our programmes.

All our research and treatment protocols and methods have the approval of external independent ethics authorities, and are regularly monitored and assessed by them.

Thanks: My appreciation is extended to the CREATE Consortium backed by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Mine Health and Safety Council, the US Government sponsoring the PEPFAR programme, and the HIV Vaccine Trials Network. We value the opportunities they have afforded us and the confidence placed in us as well as their constructive inputs and guidance. We look forward to continue working with you in your major philanthropic enterprises which benefit so many.

Without AngloGold Ashanti's massive assistance we would not have been able to gain our independence and register as a not-for-profit PBO. In particular I would like to thank Mr. Bobby Godsell for the confidence he generates for our future and his personal contribution to the ethical and governance stature of the Institute. My thanks too to Anglo American South Africa for continuing to positively engage us in their programmes.

To my friend and colleague Dr. Brian Brink for initially exposing me to Aurum and the constant support and guidance he continues to give to us.

My thanks also to: Nigel Unwin, Aurum's past Chairman for his sanguine support at all times, and his wisdom so generously given; to the retiring Board members whom I know will keep a keen eye on our activities - you should know that we will meet again; Gavin Churchyard and Dave Clark for the open welcome and constant engagement as I find my feet; and to our new Board and its scientific advisory committee.

The Aurum Institute is at the end of its beginning. It has been endowed with the stuff of commitment and excellence. I ask that we leave no stone unturned in our endeavour to do some good.



Dr. Paul Davis
Chairman

