

DISCOVERY FOUNDATION EXCELLENCE AWARD 2008

The Wits Initiative for Rural Health Education (WIRHE) recently received a coveted Discovery Foundation Excellence Award for 2008, worth R1 million.

WIRHE was launched in 2003 by the Division of Rural Health within the Wits Faculty of Health Sciences. Its purpose is to recruit disadvantaged students from rural areas into the health sciences and to support them towards becoming healthcare professionals. WIRHE aims to address personnel shortages in targeted areas and to provide a model for addressing the workforce shortages in rural areas. The programme particularly supports rural students from the North West province, which has the lowest doctor-population and other health professional-population ratios in the country. There are currently 41 students in the WIRHE programme.



The Discovery Foundation Excellence Award is made annually to “an organisation or institution that demonstrates excellence in service delivery, training and innovation for the benefit of South African healthcare, particularly by way of strengthening human resources in the health sector”.

Ms Nontsikelelo Sondzaba (Lecture, Rural Health and coordinator of the WIRHE programme) and Professor Merryll Vorster (Vice Dean, Faculty of Health Sciences) attended a gala function in Sandton on 11 June 2008, where the Award was formally presented to them by Dr Vincent Maphai, Chairperson of the Discovery Foundation. (Professor Ian Couper, the Founder of WIRHE, was overseas at the time and thus unable to attend the function.)

The award will be used to recruit additional students in North West Province who have the potential to train for health science careers and to fund them for their initial year of studies, after which time the North West Department of Health will take over funding, in terms of an existing agreement between WIRHE and the Department.

Photograph: Dr Vincent Maphai hands over a symbolic representation of the 2008 Discovery Foundation Excellence Award to Ms Nontsikelelo Sondzaba and Professor Merryll Vorster

REQUEST FOR VOLUNTEERS

Masters students working in the School of Physiology Sleep Laboratory are recruiting volunteers for two studies:

1. Reflex testing in people with Restless Legs Syndrome. People suffering from Restless Legs Syndrome are required to spend ONLY ONE night staying in the sleep lab. Reflexes will be tested in the evening and morning.

Contact: Sam Kerr 072 731 2216 or sekerr.sa@gmail.com

2. The impact of sleep disturbance on body weight and metabolism in mothers. Requirements: First time mothers on oral contraceptives and whose babies are between 6 and 12 months.

Contact: Terri Marks 072 705 5610 or terri@claylastic.com. Travel expenses will be compensated.
