

Paediatrician scoops top award at Nestle Awards

Dr Siyazi Mda, a paediatrician and senior lecturer at the University of Limpopo, was presented with the prestigious Nestlé Nutrition Institute of Africa (NNIA) Award at Nestlé South Africa's new head offices in Bryanston earlier this month.

The award is in recognition of Dr Mda's best peer-reviewed scientific publication in the field of nutrition. This ground-breaking scientific publication is featured in the *Journal of Nutrition* (2010:140:969 – 974) under the title 'Short-term Micronutrient Supplementation Reduces the Duration of Pneumonia and Diarrhoeal Episodes in HIV- Infected Children.'

The study shows a significant reduction in disease episodes and hospital stay of HIV-infected children aged 4 - 24 months under the multi-micronutrient supplementation programme, as part of their treatment regime during

hospitalisation due to pneumonia and diarrhoea.

In his acceptance speech, Dr Mda told nutrition experts present at the award ceremony that the commonest paediatric admission diagnosis in South African hospitals is pneumonia and diarrhoea.

'These diseases are more severe in HIV positive children. HIV positive children make up 60% of paediatric admissions in South Africa. The children are often micronutrient deficient and we know that micronutrient deficiencies result in increased infection rates, even for pneumonia and diarrhoea,' said Dr Mda.

Dr Mda's research intends to break this cycle which is compromising children's potential for recovery. The results also showed that hospitalisation was reduced by 1,6 days and 1,9 days for children admitted for diarrhoea and pneumonia, respectively.

NNIA Chairman, Professor Gabriel Anabwani presented the award. Anabwani said the institute is committed to shared knowledge in the area of nutrition and the contribution that scientific publications make in advancing common understanding of nutrition in Africa. 'We reviewed a number of academic articles and Dr Mda's work stood out,' added Professor Anabwani.

Professor Anabwani is the former chair of paediatrics at the Princess Marina Hospital, which is Botswana's largest hospital and is the current head of Baylor College of Medicine in Gaborone. He has extensive leadership experience in paediatric HIV/ Aids care, treatment and clinical research in Africa.

Ravi Pillay, Nestlé Nutrition Institute of Africa (NNIA) T+27 (0)11 514 6799