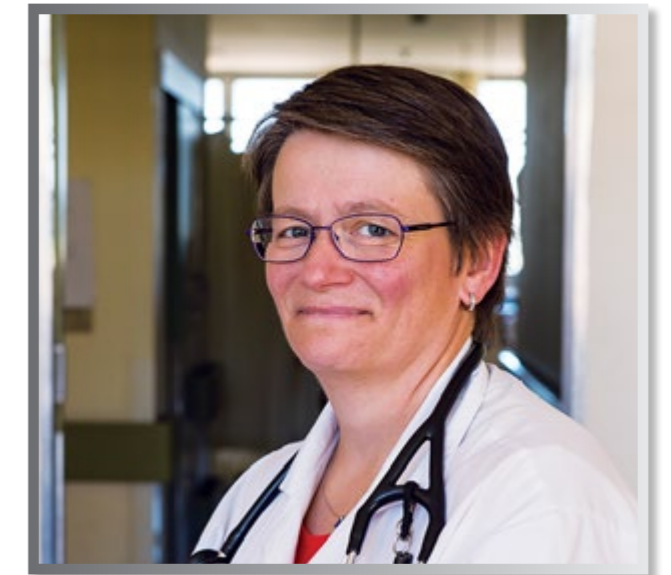




DIVISION OF
**MEDICAL
EDUCATION**

Getting the best out of students



Professor Vanessa Burch
Head of
Medical Education

Over the past decade, the education portfolio within the Department of Medicine has grown considerably and a Division of Medical Education with a team of clinician educators and administration staff dedicated to running the department's wide range of undergraduate and postgraduate courses was established to help make sure that students benefit from the best teaching and assessment strategies.

Over the past five years, this function has been overseen by Professor Vanessa Burch, who has put together a team of outstanding clinicians who have developed considerable expertise in the scholarship of curriculum design, teaching, learning and assessment, with a strong emphasis on educational practices supported by hard data, a development coined 'Best Evidence Medical Education'.

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Professor Vanessa Burch conducting a ward round.

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Key recent developments for undergraduates include the assessment of clinical competence using a directly observed objective structured clinical examination (OSCE)-style clinical examination of four cases rather than the traditional ‘short and long case’ format, and the introduction



Doctor Elana van Heerden, intern, preparing to carry out a procedure on a patient.

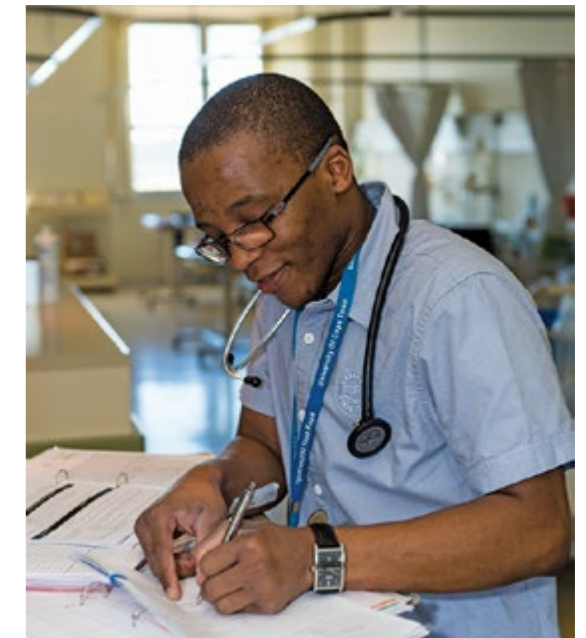
of a portfolio-based structured oral examination about six years ago. This examination has greatly improved the quality of bedside case presentations by undergraduate students.

In addition, a unique bedside-based language course, with a specific focus on teaching students to conduct medical interviews in isiXhosa and Afrikaans, was launched in conjunction with the Department of African Languages at UCT.

For postgraduates, the Division of Education successfully launched the new MMed dissertation programme in 2013 and has already graduated its first candidates.

In addition, an annual Refresher Course for candidates writing Part I of the fellowship examinations of the College of Physicians of South Africa was set up just over three years ago. Attendance has grown from about 30 participants at the first course to more than 120 registrations for 2014. Candidates come from all over South Africa as well as neighbouring countries, including Malawi, Namibia and Botswana.

The division also has an active outreach programme and has been instrumental in developing the core curriculum and the use of



Doctor Philasande Mkoko, medical registrar, writing patient notes.

portfolio-based learning and assessment in the Rural Clinical School at Stellenbosch University over the past three years, among other initiatives.

“The most exciting part of my work is the opportunity I have of growing and nurturing talented young clinicians and watching them grow to become respected colleagues. Nothing beats the thrill of engaging young minds, which stretch like ever-lengthening elastic bands,” says Professor Burch.

But she admits that finding ways of helping everyone succeed is not easy. “The most challenging part of my work is making tough decisions about students who struggle and need to repeat courses. But the return on the investment always brings a smile to my face. Many of my younger colleagues have excelled against enormous odds and have gone on to become role models for the next generation of students facing similar challenges.”

Professor Burch says that the only legacy that matters to her is the next generation of healthcare professionals in Africa. “Africa needs Africans who can lead and succeed and that is what I am here to facilitate!”