

Mobile Health Clinics on the road to eliminate HIV

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As we celebrate World Aids Day, a local company, Mobile Health Clinics (MHC), is set to play an integral role in the achievement of the UNAIDS 90-90-90 goal and stop the HIV epidemic in its tracks by 2030.



The MHC HIV mobile, ready to roll out and start HIV testing in remote areas

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MHC is geared to implement lasting change in the communities it operates in by providing cost effective and efficient mobile HIV testing and treatment facilities to remote rural communities. With their HIV solution, MHC does not only reach people who do not have access to these facilities, but has also shortened the time between a positive diagnosis and initiation of HIV treatment from six weeks to a few hours – a major stride forward in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

MHC is a subsidiary of Mobile Satellite Technologies (MST), the market leader in the provision and operation of specialised vehicle solutions in southern Africa. Uwe Schön, GM of MHC is confident that with the technical,

operational and financial backing of its holding company they have developed an effective HIV solution that addresses several of the problems linked to providing testing and treatment to rural communities and believe they will play an integral part in stopping the HIV/AIDS epidemic by 2030, a goal set out in the World Health Organisation's (WHO) fast track strategy.

CEO of MST, Fernando Acafrao is incredibly excited about the potential change that this branch of the company can implement. "Our HIV project is the solution to give people access to HIV treatment. Mobility is the future in so many ways because of the shortage of skills and bureaucracy," he says.

Acafrao explains the WHO has identified a range of stipulations that will help eradicate HIV by 2030 and MHC set out to fulfil these stipulations to achieve this goal. By making not only testing available to people in the most rural of areas, but also having the ability to start ARV treatment immediately, MHC eliminates the possibility of mixing up results and addresses the issue of tracking down people to deliver drugs up to six weeks after they have been diagnosed. "We do all the relevant tests like CD4 count, creatinine and can diagnose tuberculosis in 90 minutes instead of six weeks on the bus. Our qualified staff can provide ARVs on the same day. In urban areas, that abbreviation means saving time, in villages with treatment-detouring healthcare shortages, it means saving lives. Taking diagnostics mobile is changing the lives of patients," he says.

The UNAIDS Fast Track report published in 2014 states that for HIV programmes to be effective, they must reach people on a sustainable basis and address social and structural issues that deter people from accessing services. This is where MHC's mobile testing and treatment facilities come in. The mobile clinics can test up to 200 people per day and, since receiving accreditation to supply ARVs, have initiated treatment on 50 people in five days. Numbers also show that more men are being tested by the mobile clinics, another major milestone as, historically, male numbers at local clinics are lower because of the stigma still attached to the illness – the mobility of the clinic and the fact that the person doing the testing is not from the community eliminates this issue.

Acafrao concludes and says the MHC HIV solution is not only effective but also cost effective: "This is a unique solution that makes testing and treatment available to those people in the most remote communities. The return on investment is unbelievable. What we're building here is incredible."

For more information, please visit the MHC website at www.mobilehealthclinics.net or email info@mobilehealthclinics.net.

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