

Getting smart about little hearts

*Kids of the Cape, an NPO registered with the Department of Social Services, generously donated the funds to Heart and Stroke Foundation South Africa (HSFSA) with the intention of a *Pulse Oximeter to detect heart disease in newborn babies and young children. Kids of the Cape hand-picked the Mowbray Maternity Unit in the Western Cape as the recipient of the Pulse Oximeter and handed over the gift on Friday, 19 May 2017.*

**A device which measures the oxygen in the blood of babies, the results of which can be used to detect Congenital Heart Disease (CHD), the most common heart disease found in children.*



Picture: The Pulse Oximeter was handed over by Prof Pamela Naidoo, CEO of the Heart and Stroke Foundation South Africa.

Pulse oximetry testing is standard practice in countries like America. However, many hospitals and health facilities in South Africa simply do not have pulse oximeters, staff training or policies in place to make this happen, yet the World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends that ***“pulse oximeters should be in every health facility worldwide”***.

The use of pulse oximetry as a screening tool can reduce the chance of overlooking critical CHD in newborn babies. When babies are screened, using pulse oximeters, for critical CHD before they are discharged, newborn babies who have been diagnosed with critical CHD can then receive special care and treatment that is essential in preventing death or disability early in life.

Pulse oximetry is effective because it is:

- Painless
- Cost-effective
- Non-invasive
- Easy to incorporate into newborn assessments
- Takes only 3 minutes to screen for critical CHD
- Measures the amount of oxygen in the baby's blood

“We all have a responsibility to ensure that not only health care workers are using this tool with the correct knowledge but also to empower parents to ask for the pulse oximeter to be used within the first 24 hours of a child's life. When more moms know this is available to them and why, the more proactive parents will become in insisting on the screening of CHD.”

Once the handover was complete, all the relevant parties met to discuss the effectiveness of the pulse oximeter and the benefits thereof. Professor Pamela Naidoo also spoke about babies who have had strokes and used that forum to proposed how to address the matter.

All organisations present were represented by the following respective attendees:

- Mowbray Maternity Hospital (MMH) - CEO Janine Joemat, Dr Nikki van Niekerk, Dr Lucy Linley, Karen Moore (Head of Nursing Services), Sr Le Grange and Sr Beatrice Africa
- HSFSa- Professor Pamela Naidoo (CEO), and Rubeshan Nayager (Business Manager)
- Our Kids of the Cape - Tana Breytenbach, Alison Kranenburg and Prof Krisela Steyn
- PMT- Trustee Lloyd Abrahams and myself Lincey van Niekerk (Admin)

Ends

For more information on CHD contact the Heart and Stroke Foundation South Africa on 08601 HEART (43278) or email heart@heartfoundation.co.za and for more on Our Kids of the Cape, click here: <http://www.vtow.co.za/ourkidsofthecape/> or call 021-657 4500

About the Heart and Stroke Foundation SA

The Heart and Stroke Foundation South Africa (HSFSa) plays a leading role in the fight against preventable heart disease and stroke, with the aim of seeing fewer people in South Africa suffer premature deaths and disabilities. The HSFSa, established in 1980 is a non-governmental, non-profit organization which relies on external funding to sustain the work it carries out.

The HSFSa aims to reduce the cardiovascular disease (CVD) burden in South Africa and ultimately on the health care system of South Africa. Our mission is to empower people in South Africa to adopt healthy lifestyles, make healthy choices easier, seek appropriate care and encourage prevention.

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