

NEWS FROM:



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UCT research tackles Ghana's barriers to healthcare access

The University of Cape Town is set to graduate more than 70 PhDs during the December 2011 graduation ceremonies. Among these are international students whose research focused on issues specific to their home countries. With a primary focus on Ghana, Bertha Garshong's thesis tackles the challenge of access to healthcare.

Garshong's thesis, *Benefit incidence of health services in Ghana and access factors influencing benefit distribution*, investigated the distribution of the benefits from using health services across socio-economic groups; assessed if benefits are distributed according to need; and identified health system and community factors that influence the distribution of health service benefits in Ghana. This cross-sectional study used quantitative and qualitative methods to prove that health service benefits are not distributed according to need.

Garshong argues that overall, health care benefits are pro-rich, with the exception of public inpatient care at the district hospital level and to some extent for public sector primary care services. Key access barriers include direct and indirect costs of seeking care – especially travel time and expenses, which particularly affect poor rural populations. Organisational factors such as availability of staff and equipment, unpredictability of opening hours and poor staff attitudes deter use. Informational factors, especially on the National Health Insurance Scheme, also act as barriers to use.

Garshong works with the Research and Development Division of the Ghana Health Service as a social scientist, and has worked with the service for more than 15 years. She has conducted research on Ghana's health care system, and on malaria, HIV/AIDS, lymphatic filariasis and adolescent reproductive health.

Please note: Information in this release is based on the supervisor's citation for the PhD thesis. UCT advises journalists to obtain a copy of the thesis and/or interview the PhD graduate to verify and expand on this information.

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