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UCT students shine as health professionals of the future

A University of Cape Town medical student and a recent UCT graduate have together scooped the inaugural 2012 Emerging Public Health Practitioners award for innovative articles they have each written in the field of public health.

The awards were presented at the recent official launch of the South African Health Review (SAHR), which was attended by Health Minister Aaron Motsoaledi.

Nadia Hussey, a third-year UCT medical student, won the award with Oluwatoyin Adeleke, a Masters of Public Health graduate from the School of Public Health and Family Medicine at UCT.

Their articles will be published in the SAHR.

Hussey's article focused on the language barriers many patients face when they need to access health care. She conducted her research in Madwaleni hospital in the rural Eastern Cape.

Hussey found that work efficiency, as well as the provision of holistic treatment, suffered as a result of the language barrier.

"It makes communication time-consuming, which increases frustration levels and decreases empathy, approachability and confidentiality," she said.

Hussey's article also looked at how English-speaking health professionals at the hospital are trying to overcome these difficulties.

"This award has been a wonderful learning experience for me. I hope the chapter will highlight the important role of communication and language in the provision of equitable holistic health care," said Hussey.

Adeleke, who hails from Nigeria, won the award for an article she wrote on barriers

in implementing TB infection control measures among South African health care workers. She hopes the article will help to inform the way health policy is planned, implemented and evaluated.

Adeleke has returned to Nigeria following her studies at UCT with renewed vigour to help bring about change in the health sector in Africa.

“My career goal is to be a positive change agent that will contribute to health sector reform first in Nigeria, then Africa and globally,” she said.

“I would like to actively participate in a public health revolution that embraces a primary health care approach to equitable access to health care in Africa,” Adeleke said.

The Health Systems Trust, which announced the awards, said the entries had been assessed by a panel of public health care experts. Published since 1995, the widely-read SAHR provides a South African perspective on local and international public health issues.

Hussey and Adeleke are both available for interviews.

CAPTION FOR ATTACHED PHOTOGRAPH: The winners of the Emerging Public Health Practitioners Award for 2012, Nadia Hussey and Oluwatoyin Adeleke, flanked by the editors of the South African Health Review, Rene English (on far left) and Ashme Padarath (far right).

ENDS

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