



Expanding nursing practice in South Africa



bringing them comfort and basic nursing care. The home carers work under the guidance of nurses at the hospital. The program also distributes accurate information about the disease and an opportunity to discuss prevention with family members. “I feel that you have to practice nursing within different environments,” Lu says. “We are citizens of a global community.”

This will be the first time YSN will be directly collaborating with Yale Medical School’s HIV/AIDS initiative in KwaZulu-Natal. Dr. Gerald H. Friedland, Professor of Medicine and Epidemiology and Director of the AIDS Program at Yale, has worked there for five years with Dr. Tony Moll, who leads the HIV/AIDS program at COSH, on a study examining the relationship between HIV and tuberculosis infections. Former YSN faculty member Terri Clark set up an innovative program in the maternity ward at COSH for YSN midwifery students. Both of these projects have led to the growth of a strong and mutually beneficial relationship between Yale and colleagues in Tugela Ferry.

Susan Barringer, associate director of the Yale Center for International Nursing Scholarship and Education, made an assessment visit to the area to learn about the Philanjalo program last year and to lay the groundwork for clinical exchanges. “It’s a very challenging setting,” she says. “There is so much poverty and illness, so many unsolvable problems and cultural differences. It can be overwhelming to students, not to mention seasoned providers.”

While in KwaZulu-Natal, the YSN students learned about the interaction between Philanjalo, the hospital, and the hospital’s thirteen health clinics, which are spread throughout the region. They made home visits, participated in community health education sessions at the clinics and observed nursing practice in rural settings where nurses are the de facto primary care providers for most health needs. For these nurse practitioner students, this proved to be an inspiring experience. The goal was to give them an understanding of community health practices in a rural region and to make them think critically about the challenges of delivering health care in this particular community.

“We’re offering an experience in which they can begin to understand the health care system and see how it is delivered in a very culturally different setting,” Barringer says.

Longinotti says she hopes to practice in underserved community health settings and believes that she will get valuable experience while in South Africa.

“One of the reasons I chose Yale was because of its international work,” Longinotti says. “I want to go back to these areas throughout my life and I would like to learn as much as I can from these trips. As nurses, if we can help in any way, I think it’s our job to do that.”

Regina Longinotti had not even stepped on a plane bound for Tugela Ferry, South Africa and was already talking about going back to the Zulu village. She knows the need is that great.

Over the summer, Longinotti joined fellow YSN student Kun Lu on a three-week community health rotation in Tugela Ferry, which is in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, to work with and learn from volunteers and nurses who provide home-based care to HIV/AIDS patients throughout the region.

They worked primarily with Philanjalo, a nonprofit organization created by a group of doctors and community members from the Church of Scotland Hospital (COSH). Philanjalo has organized roughly 300 local women to serve as “home carers,” to visit people living with AIDS in their homes,