



BUSINESS UPDATE

Scholarships to boost medical brain power

Life Healthcare has committed to spend R78 million over the next six years on scholarships to boost the pool of medical sub-specialists in South Africa.

The group will invest R13 million a year to give about 36 doctors two-year intensive sub-specialist training, creating a cadre of highly trained professionals to help address the skills crisis in our medical industry.

An important criterion for the scholarships is that the doctors must commit to remain and work in the country after their specialist training.

The scholarships have been launched in partnership with The Colleges of Medicine SA (CMSA) and welcomed by Professor Zephne van der Spuy, Immediate Past President of the CMSA and Chairman of the Selection Committee.

“These scholarships are a major boost, particularly in new sub-specialities where funded training opportunities are often not available but skills are needed,” she said. “We see this as a very exciting development and believe it will contribute to improving healthcare in the public sector within South Africa.”

Research by the CMSA in late 2010 showed that 500 specialists qualify each year, but this has not eased the national shortage of more than 4,500 specialists.

Life Healthcare CEO Michael Flemming said the initiative was extremely important because private healthcare groups could not simply draw staff from the existing national supply, but had to make a significant contribution to restocking the skills pool for the benefit of all South Africans.

“It is important for sustainability that we play a role,” says Flemming. “The model we see in the health care arena has to change and the private health care sector must make a contribution to assist the government.”

Life already sponsors three scholarships for medical specialists at a cost of R1.8 million a year and trains about 1300 nursing practitioners every year through its Life College of Learning. The new scholarships will increase that contribution significantly.

If suitable posts are not available in state facilities once the specialists qualify, Life Healthcare will have the first right of refusal in offering them practice opportunities.

For more information, refer to the Colleges of Medicine website www.collegemedsa.ac.za or phone (021) 689 9533.