



## Centre for health Systems Research & Development

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### Towards universal ARV access: achievements and challenges in Free State Province, South Africa

#### CITATION

Uebel KE, Timmerman V, Ingle SM, Van Rensburg DHCJ & Mollentze WF. 2010. Towards universal ARV access: achievements and challenges in Free State Province, South Africa. *South African Medical Journal*, 100(9): 589-593.

#### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** To study the progress and challenges with regard Africa.

**Methods:** Data from the first 4 years of the public sector ARV roll-out and selected health system indicators were used. Data were collected from the public sector ARV database in Free State Province for new patients on ARVs, average waiting times and median CD4 counts at the start of treatment. Information on staff training, vacancy rates and funding allocations for the ARV roll-out was obtained from official government reports. Projections were made of expected new ARV enrollments for 2008 and 2009 and compared with goals set by the National Strategic Plan (NSP) to achieve universal access to ARVs by 2011.

**Results:** New ARV enrollments increased annually to 25% of the estimated need by the end of 2007. Average waiting times to enrollment decreased from 5.82 months to 3.24 months. Median CD4 counts at enrollment increased from 89 to 124 cells/ $\mu$ l. There is a staff vacancy rate of 38% in the ARV programme and an inadequate increase in budget allocations.

**Conclusion:** The current vertical model of ARV therapy delivery is unlikely to raise the number of new enrollments sufficiently to achieve the goals of universal access by 2011 as envisaged by the NSP. The Free State is implementing a project (STRETCH trial) to broaden the ARV roll-out in an attempt to increase access to ARVs.