

AAAS NEWS AND NOTES

edited by TIFFANY AYERS

HUMAN RIGHTS

AAAS Reports on Health Sector Role in South Africa's Apartheid

White health professionals in South Africa violated internationally recognized standards for medical personnel in support of apartheid policies, according to a report released in December by AAAS. The report reveals a pattern of abuses, which include refusing emergency care treatment; ignoring torture of detainees in prisons; and denying or limiting access by blacks to ongoing medical care.

The book, *Human Rights and Health: The Legacy of Apartheid*, cites several examples of abuses by white health care professionals, including falsifying medical records to cover up the existence of torture; turning over men, women, and children who had been wounded by gunshots in political demonstrations to the police without providing treatment; and mistreating the mentally ill and mentally retarded, including sterilizing patients without their consent. The report was prepared at the request of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) by AAAS and the Physicians for Human Rights, in conjunction with The

American Nurses Association and the Committee for Health in Southern Africa.

"The racism that so deeply infected the health system will continue to cause pain and injury to South Africans unless specific changes are made," said Audrey Chapman, director of the AAAS Science and Human Rights Program.

The report calls for concrete reforms to overcome the apartheid legacy in the health care system. Recommendations include adopting human rights standards for health professionals;

training all health professionals in international human rights principles; and monitoring the health sector for compliance with human rights standards.

The report describes two separate health care systems in South Africa: one a world-class medical care system for whites and one of filth and degradation for blacks. The system discouraged blacks from seeking to become health professionals; ignored diseases primarily affecting black people; and denied basic sanitation, clean water supply, and other components of public health to



Wendy Orr

homelands and townships where blacks were forced to live.

The report is especially critical of the role of health professional organizations and the leadership of these organizations. "The conduct of the leaders of health professional organizations was in many respects the most egregious of all," the report concludes. "These individuals occupied positions of power and prestige and could more safely speak out in support of medical ethics and human rights."

"The common cry is 'I was not a policeman, I was not in the government, I was not a part of it,'" said Wendy Orr, a TRC commissioner, at AAAS headquarters when the report was released. "We've succeeded in breaking down this defense."

MEMBERSHIP

New Service Provides Funding Opportunities

AAAS members will now be able to receive targeted, hard-to-find research and education funding information at a fraction of the usual cost. Thanks to a partnership between AAAS and Research and Management Systems, Inc. (RAMS), AAAS members can receive RAMS's U.S. Opportunity Alert (USOA) e-mail service, which delivers targeted funding alerts to thousands of university, business, and non-profit researchers and educators nationwide. The service, which provides funding opportunities from the federal government, foundations, associations, and corporations, is the most comprehensive of its kind.

"Time spent seeking grants is time not spent doing vital research," said Mike Spinella, director of marketing for AAAS Membership Services. "The USOA service will help members cut down the amount of time they have to spend locating appropriate potential funding sources."

USOA delivers only targeted funding opportunities. Subscribers build a profile of keywords describing their research interests; USOA then searches all new funding opportunities on a daily basis, and delivers those that match the subscriber's profile. AAAS members can receive a 6-month subscription for \$39.95, less than half the normal price, and a 1-month free trial. Call 800-875-2562 or visit www.usalert.com/aaas.asp.

ELECTIONS

Nominations for AAAS Fellows

AAAS Fellows who are current members of the Association are invited to nominate members for election as Fellows. A Fellow is "a Member whose efforts on behalf of the advancement of science or its applications are scientifically or socially distinguished." Each nomination must be sponsored by three Fellows, one of whom must not be affiliated with the nominee's institution. Election is by the AAAS Council.

Nominations with complete documentation must be received by 1 June 1999. Nominations received after that date will be held for the following year. Nomination forms are available from Linda McDaniel, by mail at the AAAS Executive Office, 1200 New York Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20005, or by telephone at 202-326-6635.

Questions regarding the Fellow status of specific members can be directed to Ms. McDaniel by e-mail at lmcdanie@aaas.org. The *Directory of AAAS Fellows* is available from the AAAS Distribution Center, P.O. Box 521, Annapolis Junction, MD 20701 (\$14.95 for members, plus \$4 for handling and shipping, prepaid).