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NNASA takes the lead

We are pleased and proud to inform you that the Neonatal Nursing Association of Southern Africa (NNASA) together with The Council of International Neonatal Nurses (COINN) are hosting the 7th International Conference for Neonatal Nurses (ICNN) at the ICC in Durban from the 24-27th October 2010.

Our theme "Achieving excellence by finding global solutions" reflects the aim of all neonatal nurses to constantly give of their best in their pursuit of excellence in patient care. The conference will support this by offering pre-conference skills workshops and a comprehensive scientific programme of local and international presenters who will equip delegates with knowledge of the latest research and practice to facilitate the implementation of evidence-based neonatal care. We hope to encourage innovation, reward excellence, inspire, motivate and promote passion for our calling.

Neonatal care in Kwa-Zulu Natal (KZN) is under the spotlight at the moment following the unfortunate deaths of so many babies from infection. Poor funding, lack of staff and equipment leading to impossible work loads, and almost no training opportunities have resulted in disillusionment, frustration and an inability to recruit and retain staff in this highly specialised and stressful field.

The conference will be a great opportunity to promote neonatal nursing within South Africa and indeed Africa itself as we hope to attract many delegates from our continent. We will have an opportunity to showcase our neonatal units through visits to regional and tertiary (quaternary) hospitals in Durban and possibly Pietermaritzburg (an hour outside Durban). The visits will enable delegates to view the neonatal units and Kangaroo Mother Care wards with a trip to a local attraction in the afternoon. They will be very dependent on numbers and it would be really helpful to have some input on what delegates might be interested in seeing. The pre-conference workshops will have options for basic and advanced practice.

Basic workshops will probably include topics such as neonatal resuscitation and stabilisation for transfer. Advanced practice could include writing for publication, insertion of PICC lines, advanced practices in ventilation, graphic interpretation of lung dynamics – but again we would welcome suggestions.

Durban has a temperate, almost tropical climate with sunshine most of the year, although there can be a lot of rain (mainly afternoon thunderstorms) in the summer months from November through to February. It is characterised by long sandy white

beaches and warm blue ocean. Ushaka Marine World holds one of the five largest aquariums in the world and is the largest marine park in Africa, the Hluhluwe/Umfalozzi game reserve and iSimangaliso (Greater St Lucia) Wetlands park world heritage site are just over two hours away up the north coast and inland is the Ukahlamba Drakensberg world heritage site – a stunning mountain range with thousands of caves, many containing San rock art covering a period of 4,000 years. So there will be plenty to see and do for delegates when they are not involved in the conference.

Durban is home to the largest population of Indians outside India and KZN is also the Zulu Kingdom homeland. It has been called the last outpost of the British empire due to the large number of English speaking people. It is therefore a melting pot of different languages and cultures which brings interest and flavour but also unique challenges. KZN is also unfortunately the epicenter for the HIV virus with the largest numbers in South Africa, and South Africa itself has the highest rates of HIV infection in the world. HIV therefore impacts on neonatal care and decision making in a huge way.

By highlighting neonatal care in South Africa we expect to achieve an increased recognition of neonatal nursing as a specialty in its own right, the development of a national diploma in neonatal nursing, the possibility of international exchanges and to instil a sense of excitement and passion in our neonatal nurses. Of course we will also take pride in showing our international guests the standards of care we *have* achieved – against all odds! We also hope this will be a spring board for other African countries to launch neonatal nursing associations of their own and to develop national neonatal and maternal care policies that will impact on the devastating perinatal mortality rates we have in Africa.

We have huge expectations for this conference and hope to attract thousands of professionals involved in newborn care to come and share our vision. Although NNASA is a new association – dynamite comes in small packages! We hope you will support us in achieving this vision by partnering with us.

We look forward to working together in order to make this the most successful and influential conference yet.