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South Africa: Combatting the Rise of HIV in Adolescents
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Background
• South Africa is still recovering from many years of colonial and apartheid rule
• Since the overthrow of Apartheid in 1994, the healthcare system in South Africa has been in a process of constant change, seeking to eliminate inequities in access
• Healthcare system is strained due to lack of adequate funding, and a “brain drain” of qualified medical professionals leaving the country

The Epidemic
• Of the estimated 35 million people living with HIV/AIDS worldwide, approximately 24.7 million (70%) live in Sub-Saharan Africa (UNAIDS Global Report 2015)
• South Africa has the biggest and most high profile HIV epidemic in the world, with an estimated 7 million people living with HIV in 2015
• South Africa has the largest antiretroviral treatment program globally, and is largely domestically financed with more than $1.5 billion annually
• Infection rates of 19.2% for adolescents and adults between the ages of 15-49
• Over past 3 years, new rise in HIV infection rates among Durban youth

Blue Roof Wellness Center
• Blue Roof Wellness Center was once a nightclub infamous in the local community for violence, crime and drug and alcohol abuse
• Global Ambassador Alicia Keys and Keep a Child Alive work to transform the Blue Roof into a state-of-the-art, comprehensive care center for people living with and affected by AIDS and has been operating since 1997
• Services include anti-retroviral treatment, psycho-social support services, prevention, substance abuse programs, nutrition programs, legal advice, youth development programs, and meal services

Education Team on the way to teach about HIV and AIDS
Discussing HIV stigma and myths at Umbilo Secondary School

Stopping the Spread
• The HIV Education Program was implemented in all public primary and secondary schools in South Africa in 2000
• Program aims to make youth-friendly, sexual and reproductive health services accessible in school, enrich HIV prevention efforts and support young people who are HIV negative to remain so
• However, the percentage of schools implementing the material has dropped significantly from 60% in 2013 to 20% in 2014
• Factors include a shortage of teacher training on sexual health issues and resistance from some schools due to the stigma of the subject matter

Correcting the Myths
• My efforts focused on establishing consistent and sustainable educational efforts with three separate schools on a quarterly schedule each year
• We worked to dispel numerous local myths about transmission
• Dispelled stigma about those with HIV
• Educated on importance of proactive screening rather than avoidance of testing

Future directions
• Learned a great deal regarding public health in global setting, including the challenges of creating sustainable efforts in a culture different from my own
• Emphasized and confirmed a desire to remain engaged in Global Health as my career progresses
• Will work to contribute to the Children’s Mercy Global Health track at the conclusion of residency