

Media release

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Cooperation between Inselspital Berne and Ruedi Lüthy Foundation

Ruedi Lüthy's HIV/Aids Clinic: Stefan Zimmerli new Medical Coordinator

Prof. Stefan Zimmerli, Attending Physician at the University Clinic for Infectious Diseases at Inselspital, is to take over as Medical Coordinator of Newlands Clinic in Harare, Zimbabwe. He will be providing specialist support to the medical team with immediate effect, and ensuring ongoing education and training. Newlands Clinic, which is operated by the Ruedi Lüthy Foundation, was founded in 2004 by Prof. Ruedi Lüthy and treats around 6,000 destitute HIV patients. Ruedi Lüthy will be reducing his workload from January 2017 and will ultimately step down as Medical Director.

Following on from the appointment of Matthias Widmaier as Country Director in December 2014, the Ruedi Lüthy Foundation (formerly Swiss Aids Care International) is now dealing with securing the medical leadership of Newlands Clinic in Harare, Zimbabwe. The University Clinic for Infectious Diseases at Inselspital, Berne, will be providing support as its partner in this regard. As part of this cooperation, Stefan Zimmerli will be spending around three months per year on site in Zimbabwe. As the Medical Coordinator, he will be responsible for the reviewing and development of the treatment model on an ongoing basis in line with the latest scientific findings. He will be consulted in the case of difficult medical problems, and his duties will also include providing training to the medical staff and giving courses in HIV management to external healthcare workers in the clinic's own training centre.

Newlands Clinic provides long-term care to around 6,000 HIV/Aids patients, while also training healthcare workers from other clinics throughout Zimbabwe. It has its own experienced staff of local doctors and nurses, which can now handle the everyday running of the clinic thanks to the continual training provided by Ruedi Lüthy over the years. One of the team is Senior Physician Cleophas Chimbetete, who is currently working on his Ph. D. in life sciences at the University of Berne.

Matthias Widmaier will remain in charge of the overall running of Newlands Clinic. He is based on site all year round, and is responsible for the administrative management of the clinic and its training centre. Sabine Lüthy, Ruedi Lüthy's daughter, has been Chief Executive of the Ruedi Lüthy Foundation in Switzerland since 2012.

Statements from Inselspital, University Hospital Berne

Prof. Hansjakob Furrer, Chairman and Head, University Clinic for Infectious Diseases at Inselspital: *"Inselspital has been involved in projects in Africa in the past, and our work in Zimbabwe is part of this tradition. I know Ruedi Lüthy well and hold him in high esteem, and am therefore pleased this cooperation has been established. Stefan Zimmerli, who will be the front man in Harare, will be able to call on the proven expertise of the entire team. This will ensure the transfer of knowledge, both medical and scientific, at a high level."*

Prof. Stefan Zimmerli, Attending Physician at Inselspital: *“Newlands Clinic is a superbly organised outpatient facility. It is a privilege for me to be able to work regularly in Harare. The treatment of HIV will develop further in southern Africa in the coming years, and I am looking forward to contributing to this. Unlike in Harare, at Inselspital we seldom see HIV patients in an advanced stage of the disease. At Newlands Clinic, we can achieve a great deal with relatively simple means, and make a lasting difference in the lives of patients from the poorest backgrounds.”*

Statements from the Ruedi Lüthy Foundation

Prof. Ruedi Lüthy, founder and Medical Director of Newlands Clinic: *“I am delighted that we have been able to secure the services of Stefan Zimmerli as our Medical Coordinator. He has a wealth of knowledge in the field of HIV/Aids, and many years’ experience in the treatment of HIV patients. We have known each other since the 1990s when we worked together at University Hospital Zurich, and we share the firm belief that HIV/Aids patients need comprehensive care and support if their treatment is to be successful. Our patients live in the poorest of circumstances, and we want to give them back some prospects for the future.”*

Sabine Lüthy, Chief Executive of the Ruedi Lüthy Foundation: *“We are eagerly looking forward to working together with Inselspital and with Stefan Zimmerli. As a Swiss foundation, we have correspondingly high quality standards. Added to this, we want to ensure that the transfer of medical expertise from Switzerland to Zimbabwe is maintained even when my father, Ruedi Lüthy, is no longer regularly on site. The cooperation with Inselspital is the ideal solution for the Ruedi Lüthy Foundation. With Stefan Zimmerli as Medical Coordinator and Matthias Widmaier as Country Director, we have a strong management team with the combination of passionate commitment and expertise to take Newlands Clinic forward.”*

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About the Ruedi Lüthy Foundation

The Ruedi Lüthy Foundation (formerly Swiss Aids Care International) was set up in 2003 by Swiss Aids specialist Prof. Ruedi Lüthy. His daughter Sabine Lüthy has been Chief Executive since January 2012. The purpose of the Ruedi Lüthy Foundation is to provide comprehensive care to HIV and Aids patients in Zimbabwe. The disease is widespread in the country, with around 17% of people in the 15-49 age group being HIV positive, and around 40,000 people die every year as a result of Aids. Based in the capital, Harare, Newlands Clinic provides long-term ambulatory care to some 6,000 patients. The foundation places particular emphasis on the treatment of women, as well as children and adolescents. The regimen is rounded out by services in areas such as women’s health, nutrition, vocational training and self-help groups. The foundation is also committed to the ongoing training of local healthcare workers from other clinics, as well as research into HIV in developing countries.

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