Mobilising Community Voice to address the Social Determinants of Health – can statutory structures achieve meaningful participation in health?

Community Participation is a key element of the redesign of the South African health system, which contains the promise of Universal Access embodied by the National Health Insurance and its accompanying program to Re-engineer Primary Health Care. The National Health Act establishes structures for community participation in the form of Health Committees (HCs) to act as the interface between communities and the health services. However, the Act left the explicit roles and functions to provincial legislation. As a result, there is wide variation and inconsistency in the responsibilities, powers, and relationships of Health Committees across provinces, their institutional positioning and the extent to which they receive any support in their roles. Consequently, the ability of community voice to influence health policy and service delivery is limited and not commensurate with the policy intent of the Constitution nor with the stated goals of the National Development Plan. Work conducted through the Learning Network for Health and Human Rights to strengthen community networks and health committees in various provinces of South Africa, and collaborating with others in the region, has demonstrated the importance of community agency is expressing community need, and in engaging holders of power, to challenge inequities in services.

This seminar explores rethinking the existing model of community development, to better draw on strengths and abilities that exist in communities, in ways that neither rely for success on externally-driven resource inputs nor shift the burden onto poor communities, is a sustainable option for addressing many of the social determinants of health that characterize life in poverty.

The seminar will be presented by Prof Leslie London, a specialist in Public Health Medicine who oversees the training programmes for health professional students and registrars in Public Health Medicine within the Division of Public Health and Family Medicine at UCT. He heads the Health and Human Rights Programme in the Division which has a broad research and training mandate addressing health as a socio-economic right, and examining human rights and ethical issues in relation to the practice of health professionals. His research interests include the ethics of public health policies, conflict of interest and human rights in health systems, with a particular focus
on participation and the position of Health Committees as vehicles for democratic governance in the health system.

**Date:** Wednesday, 30 May 2018  
**Time:** 12h30 – 14h00 (lunch served from 12h30 – 13h00)  
**Venue:** School of Economics Seminar Room, Level 4, Economics Building, Middle Campus, UCT  
**RSVP:** for catering purposes, please RSVP to Beverley beverley.adams@uct.ac.za

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