

# Link between alcohol, HIV and TB

## STAFF REPORTER

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THERE is a strong link between TB, HIV and alcohol, and the government needs to respond quickly to the call for more effort to be made in tackling this fatal link.

This according to a group of experts who addressed a briefing hosted by the Soul City Institute for Health and Development Communication recently.

Speakers included Dr Sue Goldstein, executive of monitoring and evaluation at the institute; Professor Neo Morojele, deputy director of the Medical Research Council, and Agnes Shabalala, research manager of the institute.

Goldstein said several statistics showed that South Africa is one of the heaviest drinking nations, but added that there were insufficient programmes to reduce the incidence of harmful drinking.

"There are a number of challenges [regarding alcohol] which include that alcohol is easily accessible, that outlets are everywhere and also that alcohol is inexpensive. The link between HIV and alcohol is relatively high as there is an association between alcohol consumption and risky sexual behavior. The HIV prevalence rate in young women between 16 and 24 continues to increase," Goldstein said.

Morojele spoke about the International Alcohol Control (IAC) study which is a multi-country study that measures alcohol consumption, exposure to alcohol adverts and other alcohol consumption behaviours. It also measures the impact



**Dr Sue Goldstein, executive of monitoring and evaluation of Soul City Institute for Health and Development Communication, (front) with Agnes Shabalala, research manager of Soul City Institute for Health and Development and Professor Neo Morojele, deputy director of the Medical Research Council in the background.**

alcohol control policies have on drinking behaviour in different countries.

"There are very high levels of exposure to alcohol adverts which contributes to a shift in societal norms regarding alcohol and alcohol consumption in South Africa, with 90 percent of adolescent exposure being on TV," said Morojele.

Soul City Institute for Health and

Development Communication conducted a review on tuberculosis in South Africa and also conducted focus group research in Mpumalanga, Gauteng, Limpopo and KwaZulu-Natal.

Shabalala said, "There are a number of myths around the transmission and treatment of TB.

Given the high HIV prevalence and

high alcohol consumption context in the country, it is critical that South Africans test for TB so that both treatment and the necessary lifestyle changes can be made to ensure recovery from TB."

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