

TAC mourns the death of David Bourne

By *moderator*

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David Bourne died suddenly on 24 February 2009. He was a Chief Research Officer in the University of Cape Town School of Public Health and Family Medicine. Those of us in TAC and the ALP who worked with him enjoyed his vibrant, warm personality and the glee he enthusiastically conveyed whenever he called one of us to announce his, and his researchers', latest finding.

More importantly though, David was an excellent scientist of immense integrity. The School of Public Health has accurately described him as "a leading demographer and statistician in the field of HIV in South Africa." He often assisted TAC with the interpretation of epidemiological data.

On several occasions he spoke out about Stats South Africa and the Department of Health's misrepresentation of HIV statistics during the era of AIDS denialism. For example, when the Director General of Health implied in 2005 that South Africa had a TB epidemic and not an HIV one, David co-authored a forceful rebuttal of the Director General's claims in the Sunday Times. That article stated:

"It is time to move beyond the debate on the statistics. It is clear that we have a massive HIV epidemic that is causing misery and severely challenging our resources. What we should be debating is how to deliver the health interventions that will be most effective in alleviating the epidemic such as antiretroviral treatment, counselling and testing, condom distribution and sex education in schools. Millions of South Africans will die of AIDS in years to come without these interventions being implemented properly."

Recently David helped uncover a serious methodological error in the Department's annual HIV antenatal survey. His persistence and clear articulation of the problem led to the Department commissioning a multi-stake holder team to ensure the problem is rectified.

TAC conveys its deep condolences to David's family and his colleagues at the UCT School of Public Health, Medical Research Council and Centre for Actuarial Research.

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