What is Environmental Health Research?

17 August 2009

10h30-11h00

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Outline

- Environmental health
  - Defined
  - Roadmap
- Environmental health research
  - A look at the journals
  - A look at the news
- Synthesis of findings

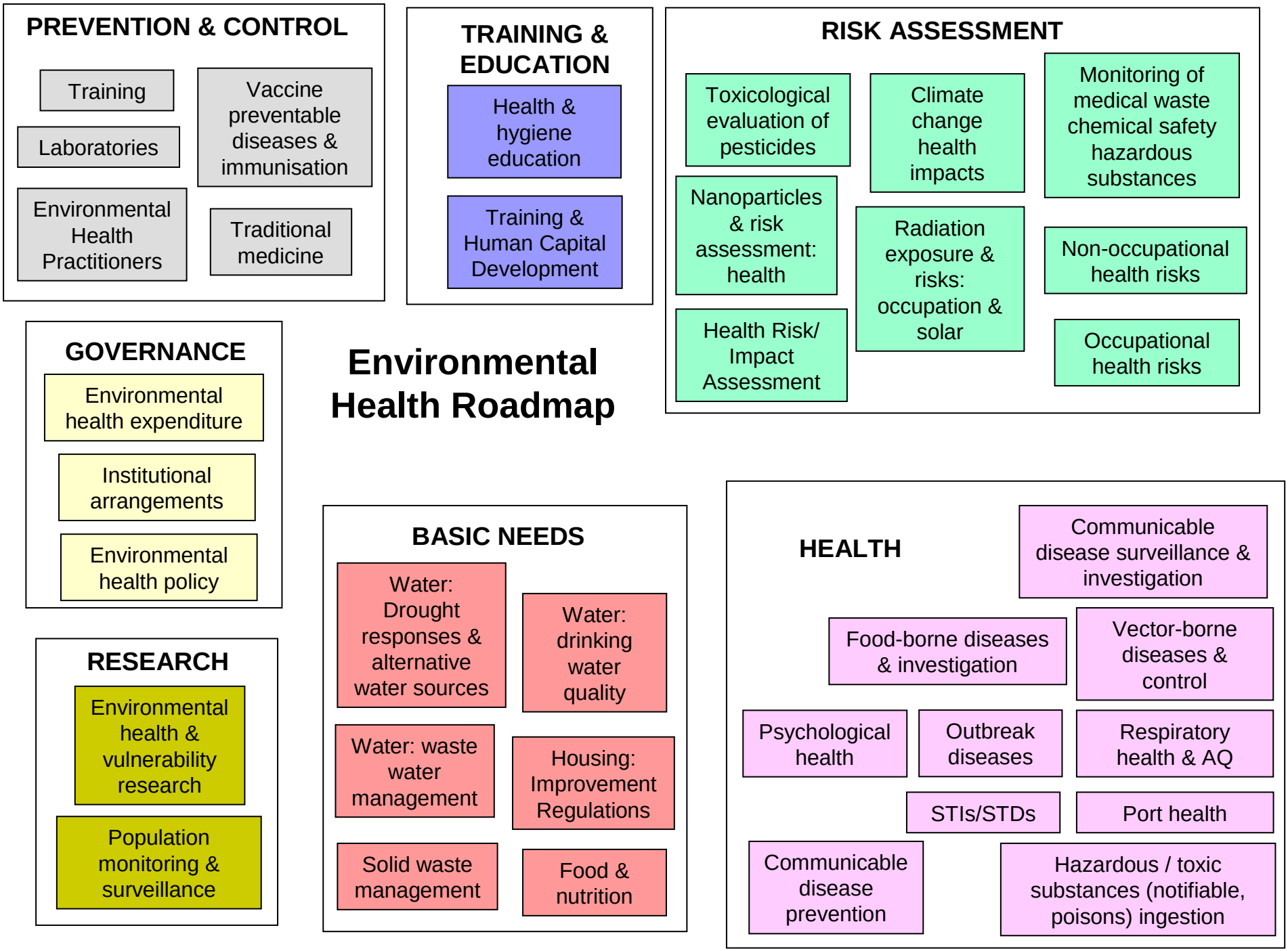
Environmental Health

- Integral part of primary health care
- Promotion of wellness
- Prevention of disease
  - With specific emphasis on controlling environmental factors that negatively impact upon human health

Environmental Health - defined

According to the World Health Organization, environmental health:

"comprises those aspects of human health & disease that are determined by factors in the environment. It also refers to the theory & practice of assessing, correcting & controlling factors in the environment that can potentially affect health."


PREVENTION & CONTROL
Training
Laboratories
Vaccine preventable diseases & immunisation
Environmental Health Practitioners
Traditional medicine
TRAINING & EDUCATION
Health & hygiene education
Training & Human Capital Development
RISK ASSESSMENT
Toxicological evaluation of pesticides
Climate change health impacts
Monitoring of medical waste chemical safety hazardous substances
Nanoparticles & risk assessment: health
Radiation exposure & risks: occupation & solar
Non-occupational health risks
Health Risk/ Impact Assessment
Occupational health risks
GOVERNANCE
Environmental health expenditure
Institutional arrangements
Environmental health policy
Environmental Health Roadmap
RESEARCH
Environmental health & vulnerability research
Population monitoring & surveillance
BASIC NEEDS
Water: Drought responses & alternative water sources
Water: drinking water quality
Water: waste water management
Housing: Improvement Regulations
Solid waste management
Food & nutrition
HEALTH
Communicable disease surveillance & investigation
Food-borne diseases & investigation
Vector-borne diseases & control
Psychological health
Outbreak diseases
Respiratory health & AQ
STIs/STDs
Port health
Communicable disease prevention
Hazardous / toxic substances (notifiable, poisons) ingestion

Environmental Health Research

- Research is a systematic investigation to extend knowledge & help humanity
- Environmental health research looks at:
  - ways to improve & control environmental factors impacting upon human health
  - understanding the epidemiology of environmental diseases
  - monitoring & evaluating environmental health of a population

Environmental Health Research

- The link between environmental health & disease is fairly well established -
  - Ill health is related to environmental hygiene
  - Improvements in environmental hygiene contribute to better health
- Improving the environment may be less complicated than changing people's behaviour

In the journals…

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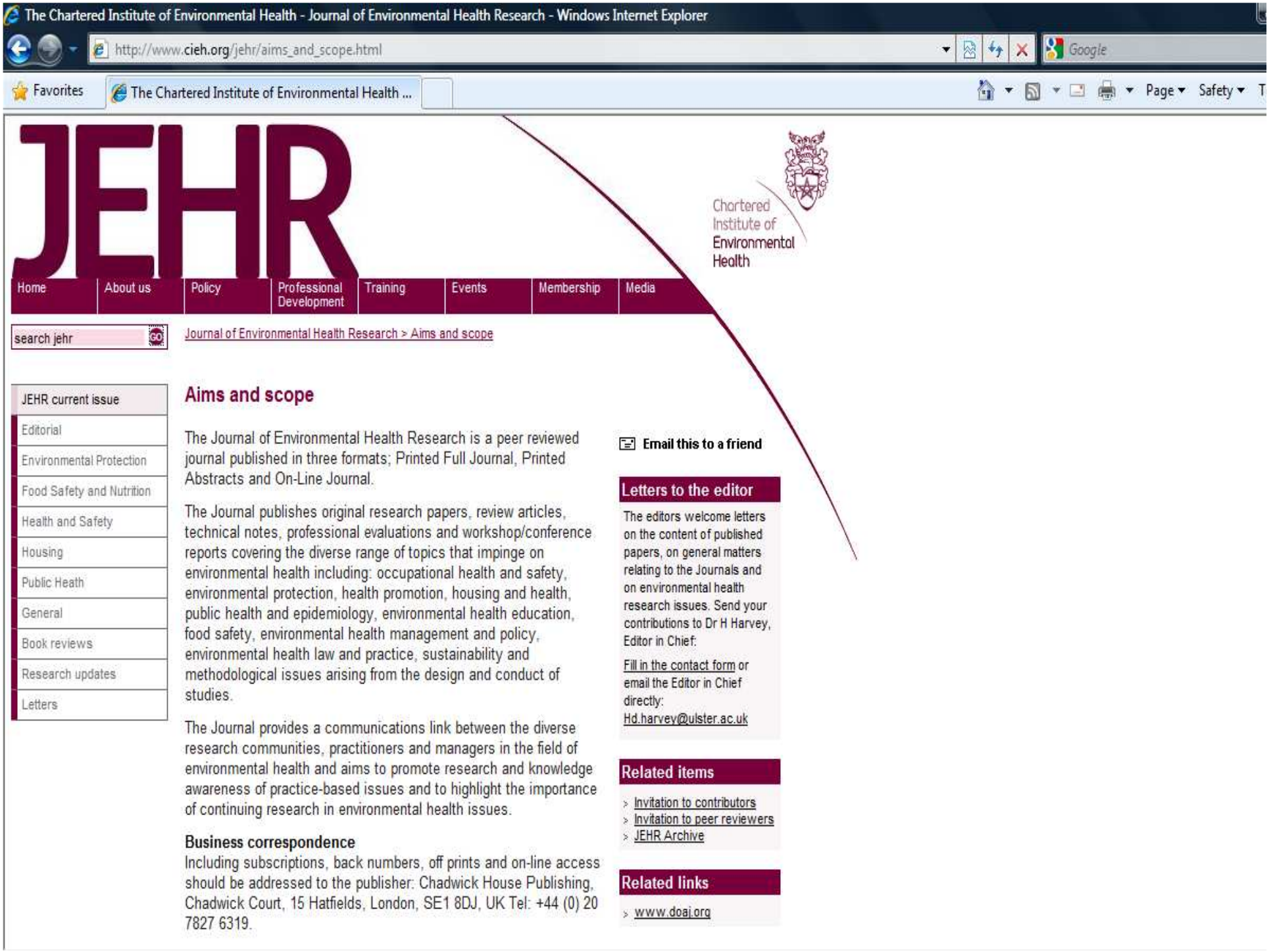
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The Journal of Environmental Health Research is a peer reviewed journal published in three formats; Printed Full Journal, Printed Abstracts and On-Line Journal.
The Journal publishes original research papers, review articles, technical notes, professional evaluations and workshop/conference reports covering the diverse range of topics that impinge on environmental health including: occupational health and safety, environmental protection, health promotion, housing and health, public health and epidemiology, environmental health education, food safety, environmental health management and policy, environmental health law and practice, sustainability and methodological issues arising from the design and conduct of studies.
The Journal provides a communications link between the diverse research communities, practitioners and managers in the field of environmental health and aims to promote research and knowledge awareness of practice-based issues and to highlight the importance of continuing research in environmental health issues.
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On the Cover | New technologies and policy approaches promise to bridge critical gaps in chemical toxicity data.
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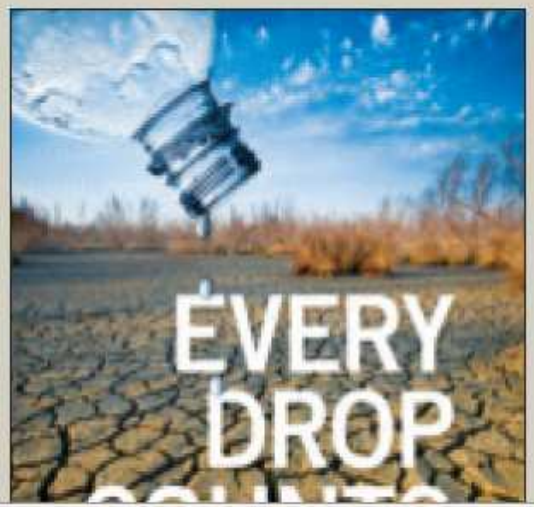

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In the news…

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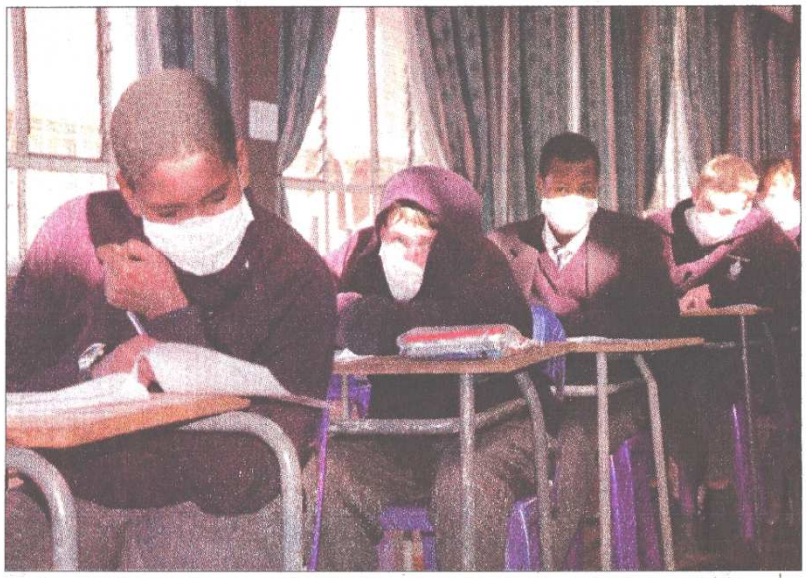
Measures to contain swine flu in place at St Alban's



Pupils at St Alban's College wear face masks as they write their examinations yesterday.
PICTURE: PATRICIA HAGEN

MOGOMOTSI MAGOME

A PRETORIA school where swine flu cases have been confirmed is taking measures to contain the spread of the virus, and parents have been advised not to panic.

The Pretoria News reported yesterday that five pupils and one staff member at St Alban's College in Lynnwood Glen had been diagnosed with the virus, which brought the reported cases in Pretoria to 10.

Other earlier reported cases included that of students at Pretoria Boys' High and at the University of Pretoria.

St Alban's College headmaster Tom Hamilton reiterated yesterday that there was no need to panic over the confirmed cases at the school.

However, he said, the school was taking measures to avoid more cases occurring.

Boys who were writing examinations yesterday did so wearing face masks and the school's sporting events scheduled for tomorrow have been postponed until next term.

In a letter that was sent to parents yesterday, Hamilton explained some of the changes that had been made in the wake of the cold weather and prevalence of flu.

"As of this morning, we had 20 boys missing school.

"Thus, 95 percent of the boys were present to write their examinations.

"All members of academic staff are well and are at school.

"We feel confident that we will be able to complete the examination cycle through to the end of the week," Hamilton said in the letter.

He stated further that it would be foolhardy to hold the Inter-House Soccer Competition, which had been scheduled for tomorrow, in the light of the cold weather and the prevalence of flu.

The Gauteng Department of Education has appealed to parents and the community not to panic and to refer children to their nearest healthcare facility or medical practitioner should they display symptoms of swine flu or any other communicable disease.

According to the National Institute for Communicable Diseases, the signs of swine flu are a flu-like fever of 38°C, cough, headache, muscle and joint pain, sore throat and runny nose, and sometimes vomiting and diarrhoea.

School feeding scheme gets injection of R150 000

METRO REPORTER

A HIGH school feeding scheme in Hammanskraal is benefiting from a partnership between the Tshwane Metro Council and the private sector.

The metro and Bogolo Consulting have come to the aid of needy pupils at Makgetse High School in Temba near Hammanskraal with a R150 000 donation.

The funds will be used to run the school's feeding project over the next three years.

Executive mayor Dr Gwen Ramokgopa said the scheme would bring about an improvement in the lives of pupils and the Hammanskraal community.

Ramokgopa said the municipality could not succeed in creating sustainable communities if it worked alone.

"We all know that education is fundamental in the development of our country, our province, our city and our communities," she said.

"It is the fundamental weapon in the fight against poverty and for creating work."

According to Ramokgopa the donations to Lebelo Primary School and Makgetse High "are a continuation of celebrating Mandela's life, values and principles".

"It is also a call to action for all of us to recognise our individual power to make an imprint and change the world around us," she said.

Crumbs! Scientists prove what we've always known

THEY can't make your hair curl, but there may be more than a crumb of truth in the claim that bread crusts are good for you.

Scientists say a chemical released during the baking process can protect against bowel cancer.

The antioxidant prevents changes in the body that can lead to a tumour. The chemical only develops as a result of a chemical reaction during cooking, and is eight times more abundant in the crust than the rest of the loaf.

Experiments with animals showed that regular intake of the chemical, pronyl-lysine, appears to halt the development of pre-cancerous lesions in the colon. Results suggest the body needs daily doses to protect against cancer.

Nine of out 10 tumours can be treated if detected early, but often patients do not report symptoms. The main warning signs include bleeding, changes in toilet habits and abdominal pain.

Good diet is thought to help protect against the disease. Experts recommend high-fibre foods, such as wholemeal bread.

But the latest study, published in the European Journal of Cancer Prevention, suggests it may be the crusts, rather than the fibre in bread, that offer the greatest benefit.

Their cancer-fighting potential was discovered in 2002, when German scientists found the chemical reaction that produces the hard brown crust – known as the Maillard reaction – also triggers the release of powerful antioxidants. Now scientists at Annamalai University in India have tested the effects of pronyl-lysine on rats.

TRUSTY CRUST: Mampheng Mojake enjoys her sandwich.

They were fed bread and exposed to a chemical known to be involved in triggering changes that can lead to bowel cancer.

Researchers monitored them to see if they developed pre-cancerous lesions, called aberrant cryptic foci. The results showed a daily portion of bread crusts appeared to reduce their development by up to 72 percent. – Daily Mail

Now even electronic cigarettes are revealed as toxic cancer time bombs

How divorce can harm you for life

Trainee medics save student after heart attack

Tiny tumours lurk for years – then kill

Jogging has its risks but it can also clear your head and lift your mood

Synthesis of findings

- Environmental health research journals cover a diverse range of topics
  - Aim to serve as a communication link between practitioners, communities & researchers
- Environmental health does not feature regularly in the news – not even good news, e.g. research findings
  - How can we change this?