

## **MMAMETLHAKE AND KWAMHLANGA, RURAL HOSPITALS WITH FIRST WORLD SYSTEMS.**

In a bold move to improve computer network scalability and accessibility especially in rural disadvantaged hospitals, the Department of Health and Social Services, Mpumalanga, instructed the implementation of a wireless computer network application at various hospitals including, Mmametlhake and KwaMlhanganga hospitals. As far as can be established this department is the first to utilize wireless technology on the scale it is presently introduced.

“Our vision is to enable nursing staff in the wards to access patient and financial data from even a laptop, whilst standing next to the patients bed.” The notorious inherited computer network did not fit the bandwidth requirements of a high technology environment, vital to the business of improving the health standards and saving the lives of the citizens of Mpumalanga.

For the past three months Mmametlhake hospital successfully piloted a wireless computer network, making it the first in the province to seamlessly switch over to this high technology computer environment. KwaMhlanga hospital will follow shortly.

The department is also introducing the principles of cost center accounting/management with the objective of decentralizing financial and logistical authority and accountability to all levels of the hospital. To achieve this objective all the cost centers or units in the hospital must be connected to financial systems. Wireless technology provides the scalability and accessibility needed to achieve this objective. This project will empower all the staff, especially nursing staff, to be part of the financial, logistical and budgeting process.

Especially in rural areas our systems has a strong dependency on Telkom and SITA who is mandated to provide the backbone or wide area services to government departments. The department is involved in vigorous negotiations with these service providers, which already resulted in improved service levels on wide area networks. The combination of improvements positively affected computer connectivity speeds, thus vital information from the rural disadvantaged areas. The wide area network needs registered with and serviced by the State IT Agency, will quadruple the present speed of some hospitals and an electronic service level management tool was procured to constantly monitor and report on services received.