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New Speaking Book on clinical Trials aimed at Communities with low Literacy Levels

A new speaking book, designed to explain the rights and responsibilities of people entering into clinical trials, has been launched for use in Africa.

The book to be launched at the World Medical Association's General Assembly in Seoul, South Korea, is aimed at patients and their relatives who do not read and write sufficiently well to understand what a clinical trial is for and how it works.

The 'speaking book' has an audio component that corresponds to text and illustrations in the book. A simple button on the book begins a conversation on rights, roles and responsibilities of patients in relation to their potential participation in a clinical trial. The book can be used by patients, social workers and community based health workers involved in clinical trials.

The project has been developed by Books of Hope together with the World Medical Association, the Steve Biko Centre of Bioethics, the South African Medical Association and funded by Pfizer.

Dr. Kgosi Letlape, Chair of the South African Medical Association, said: 'Animation and cartoons help to break down the barriers of communication and most people feel comfortable with educational material presented in this form. If you cannot understand the words, you can get the meaning from the pictures.'

Dr. Edward Hill, Chair of Council, WMA, said: 'More than ever it is necessary to do research, with, in and - most important - for poor populations. I applaud the production of the speaking book, because it means paying more attention to the poorer communities of this world instead of abandoning them or just ignoring their needs.'

It is planned to distribute 4,500 books in South Africa and three other Sub-Saharan countries before the end of 2008. Following the launch, the book will be presented to internal and external organizations with the aim of assessing additional international need.

Pfizer's vice president Dr. Jack Watters, said: "It is absolutely crucial that all people involved in clinical research - whether as a health professional, an ethics committee member or as a patient - have the necessary knowledge and/or skills to play their role. That effort is significantly supported by this book.'

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