“School girls used as guinea pigs”

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Khatija Ahmed: MEDUNSA
Sequence of events

• Thursday late – member of microbicide team at Medunsa heard article to be published in Sunday Times
• Recruiting 16 year old girls in schools and inducing them with R150 to use to buy cell phones
• Friday morning reached reporter and given 2 hours to respond
Medunsa response

- Not taken into account, ignored
- Not recruiting from schools but nearby mall
- R150 requirement from SA Medicine Control Council
- Reluctant to accept young women in uniform
Damage control

• Addressed all schools
• Met with Depts of Health and Education
• Urgent CAB meeting
• Took CAB member and CLO to all meetings
Lessons learnt

• Need to get press on board from trial preparation phase
• Need to have regular meetings throughout and keep press involved through each phase
• Need to involve CAB and members of community in meetings with press
• Sometimes despite above will still need damage control, be prepared