HIV Concerns As South Africa Moves to Universal Health Care

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Health care experts warn that South Africa doesn't have nearly enough health care workers to support the government's plan to implement universal health care, PlusNews reports. Under the new plan, each community health care worker will be responsible for 250 households, or roughly 1,000 patients. The plan has been compared to successful efforts to reduce overall mortality in Rwanda, but South Africa has fewer health care workers than Rwanda despite having five times Rwanda's population. In addition, community health care workers are restricted from performing a number of important health care tasks, such as prescribing medication or administering infant HIV tests. Experts recommend that the South African government decentralize medical functions so that community workers can provide more health benefits to their communities, and that as many as 10 times the current number of health care workers should be trained to increase access to health services.

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