

# **“School girls used as guinea pigs”**

David Coetzee

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