



■ TUKS

Facial deformity clinic marks 35 years

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THE University of Pretoria's Facial Cleft Deformity Clinic this year celebrates 35 years of changing the lives of children born with orofacial clefts.

The clinic yesterday commemorated its founder Professor Kurt Bütow who started the clinic in 1983, and the changes in technology which have seen it become one of the continent's biggest multidisciplinary clinics.

A cleft lip and palate deformity is a fairly common birth condition, whereby a baby's lip or mouth does not fuse properly during pregnancy. Being born with such a deformity can have a serious impact on a baby, affecting feeding and speech.

Bütow appealed to the community to continue to embrace children who live with cleft deformity.

"There is always improvement in technique but the journey has gone very well; we have always wanted to see happy patients who lead a normal life," he said.

Clinic head Dr Sharan Naidoo said repairing of a cleft lip or mouth was a challenge but over the years the clinic has been perfecting its technique in surgery.

One patient could need up to 10 operations throughout their life.

The clinic has, over the years, remained in touch with former patients and some were at the event to share the occasion.



ZASKIA Botha with baby Ontatile Molapo at the University of Pretoria's Facial Cleft Deformity Clinic on its 35th celebration.

Naidoo wants to assist in establishing three other multidisciplinary clinics in South Africa.

The aim would be to help more families, hoping the legacy created in Pretoria lives on.

He wants to develop and evolve the technique, train candidates with the intention of opening up centres of excellence in other areas.

"The clinic can grow in capacity that is way bigger than now and get through to more people.

"Ours has been 35 years of the greatest journey to helping families."

Naidoo said the clinic is currently having talks with the private sector to help accelerate the management of the children who are on a waiting list to receive surgery.

