

WITSIE AT THE CUTTING EDGE: Researcher Profile

Dr Benita Olivier

Senior Lecturer, Department of Physiotherapy



Who are you and what is your academic/scientific training and background?

I am a physiotherapist and senior lecturer in the Department of Physiotherapy, University of the Witwatersrand in the field of musculoskeletal physiotherapy. I was a recipient of the Friedel Sellschop Award for exceptional young researchers in 2014; I was also identified by the Mail & Guardian as one of the top 200 most influential young South Africans and I was a finalist in the 2014 Standard Bank Rising Stars Awards.

Explain the nature of the research that you are currently undertaking.

My post-doctoral vision includes development of research in the fields of injury prevention, athletic performance optimisation and the analysis of movement. I also aim to develop the Wits Physiotherapy Movement Analysis Laboratory to become a unit that advocates research excellence. The most exciting project at the moment is the development of research in the field of injury prevention in amateur and club level cricket. The amateur and club level cricketers are especially at risk of injury because they do not play cricket full time, they do not spend adequate time on training and they do not have sufficient access to sports medicine and rehabilitation resources. Did you know that the injury rate amongst fast bowlers in cricket, which is a non-contact sport, is the same as that of rugby players, which is a contact sport?

What do you think is the most pertinent/relevant/significant contribution you have made to research/science/your field?

The addition of kinematic movement analysis research to the field of physiotherapy.

Did you have a particular mentor or supervisor who inspired you in research?

Various people contributed to my development but definitely the most pertinent three people were Professor Aimee Stewart with her calm wisdom, Dr Warrick McKinnon with his superb expertise and patience, and Professor Daleen Casteleijn, my mentor and debriefing companion.

Tell us about what you do when you're not busy at work and carrying out cutting-edge research.

It seems like doing a PhD makes you very fertile, which means I now have two boys, age 18 months and 3 years, so most of my energy goes into enjoying and fulfilling their young and vibrant needs. I also love physical activity in all forms and of course... 7de Laan!

[Read one of Benita's papers:](#) **Olivier B, Stewart A, McKinnon W** (2014). Injury and lumbar reposition sense in cricket pace bowlers in neutral and pace bowling specific body positions. *The Spine Journal*, 14 (8):1447-53. doi: 10.1016/j.spinee.2013.08.036