

WITSIE AT THE CUTTING EDGE: Researcher Profile

Professor Shabnum Meer

Head: Clinical Unit, Department of Oral Pathology



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

I am an Associate Professor and Head of the Clinical Unit in the Department of Oral Pathology, School of Pathology. I am also the only Oral Pathology Consultant in private practice in Johannesburg, at Lancet Laboratories. I obtained my BChD degree at the University of the Western Cape in 1988 and following many years in private practice and in academia, I specialised in Oral Pathology at WITS having obtained an MDent (Oral Pathology) in 2001. At the time, the fellowship in Oral Pathology was not offered by the College of Medicine (SA), and I received the FC Path (SA) by peer review in 2011. I am currently doing my PhD entitled "A clinico-pathological, immunohistochemical and molecular analysis of oral plasmablastic

lymphomas". I am a member of numerous national and international societies and executive committees and am on the editorial board of international Head and Neck Pathology journals. I have received many research and teaching awards, including the Colgate Palmolive Research Award and the Philip V. Tobias and Convocation Clinical Award for Distinguished Teaching.

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

My PhD forms my primary research focus at present. It involves clinical and molecular investigations of AIDS associated plasmablastic lymphomas of which our collection of cases is the largest global series to date. I am also involved in collaborative research projects with the Department of Anatomical Pathology, University of Vermont; Burlington, USA focussing on both plasmablastic lymphomas as well as HPV associated oral squamous carcinoma. My research interest is also diversified via the many postgraduate research projects that I am presently supervising as well as other personal research foci which include HIV/AIDS pathology, and odontogenic and salivary gland pathology.

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

The most significant research contributions include defining the typical CK7+/CK20- immunoexpression in salivary gland neoplasia and outlining the entity Cystic Lymphoid Hyperplasia, a common orofacial manifestation of HIV and AIDS seen in South Africa, via the largest worldwide series of cases. These research findings have contributed significantly to clinical and pathology practice and research, both nationally and internationally.

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

The person who introduced the fun and logic of research to me early on in my career was Professor Mervyn Shear, Professor Emeritus (WITS and UWC) and once Head of Department of Oral Pathology and Deputy Vice Chancellor, WITS.

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

I enjoy crossword puzzles, walking and travel, and simply enjoying time with my family.

[Read one of Shabnum's papers:](#) Meer S, Dulabh S (2013). Cystic lymphoid hyperplasia: an orofacial lesion strongly associated with HIV and AIDS. *Histopathology*; 62(7):1067-74.