



SEPTEMBER 2025 – ISSUE 31

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SCHOOL OF
CLINICAL MEDICINE

NEWSLETTER



Dear Colleagues and Students,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the September 2025 edition of our School of Clinical Medicine newsletter. Each issue reflects the outstanding dedication, achievements, and collaborations that continue to define our community.

In this edition, you will read about inspiring staff promotions and appointments, significant contributions to national and international conferences, impactful research breakthroughs, and the remarkable ways in which our colleagues and students are shaping healthcare in South Africa and beyond.

As we celebrate these milestones, let us also look forward to the opportunities ahead, continuing to build on our strengths in teaching, research, clinical service, and innovation.

Together, we are creating a vibrant academic environment that nurtures excellence and strengthens our role as leaders in healthcare.

Happy reading, and thank you for being part of our journey.

Happy reading!
Prof Mboyo-Di-Tamba Willy Vangu
Acting Head of School

SEPTEMBER 2025

Staff Appointments and Promotions

Academic Head of Division Appointment

Congratulations to Associate Professor Hopewell Ntsinjana on his appointment as the Academic Head of Division – Division of Paediatric Cardiology, Department of Paediatrics and Child Health. He is based at the Nelson Mandela Children's Hospital.



Prof Ntsinjana holds a medical degree (MBBCh) from the University of the Witwatersrand. He also obtained a Fellowship in Paediatrics (FCPaed) from the College of Medicine of South Africa (CMSA), as well as a Certificate in Paediatric Cardiology (Cert Cardiol Paediatrics) from the same College.

He went on to train in Advanced Cardiac Imaging at Great Ormond Street Hospital for Sick Children in London, United Kingdom, and holds a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) from University College London.

Prof Ntsinjana has published extensively in both local and international scientific journals and serves as a reviewer for many of them. He is a member of the Society for Cardiovascular Magnetic Resonance Imaging, a former President of the Paediatric Cardiac Society of South Africa, and currently the Vice-President of the South African Heart Association. He previously served as a director and board member of the South African Heart Association.

Promotions

Congratulations to Prof Duvern Ramiah on his promotion to Adjunct Professor.

Prof Ramiah's professional journey has been defined by empathy, vision, and a steadfast commitment to equity in cancer care.

Having trained as a registrar in Radiation Oncology at Wits, he stayed on for a further 3 years as a consultant prior to starting in private practice, becoming the managing partner at the Sandton



Radiation Oncology unit, where he stayed for over 5 years. He subsequently broadened his horizons in private equity and venture capital, and also completed an MBA with distinction at the London Business School.

Yet, it was his conviction that the greatest impact lay in strengthening South Africa's

public health system that brought him back to academia. In 2021, he was appointed Academic Head of Division - Division of Radiation Oncology at the University of the Witwatersrand and Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital (CMJAH).

At the time, the unit was in crisis - over 2,500 patients were waiting for treatment, and the fire at CMJAH threatened to paralyse services entirely. Four years later, through determined leadership, strategic innovation, and unwavering compassion for patients, Prof Ramiah has transformed Wits Radiation Oncology into a premier academic oncology unit in the country. Today, the backlog is close to eradication, the academic programme is thriving, and the division has become a sought-after training centre for registrars across South Africa.

Prof Ramiah's clinical expertise lies in prostate cancer, where he is regarded as a national leader and has pioneered public sector brachytherapy programmes that have won awards from the Centre for Public Service Innovation and the Government Employees Medical Scheme. He is also co-chair of the oncology committee of the African Initiative Against Oesophageal Cancer (AFROC).

His broader academic interests reflect a deep concern for equity locally and globally where he has advanced the use of disruptive innovations, including artificial intelligence, to democratise access to radiotherapy. In recognition of this work, he has been invited to deliver a lecture at the American Society of Radiation Oncology (ASTRO) Annual Meeting in San Francisco in October 2025.

Prof Ramiah's influence extends well beyond Wits. He serves on the Ministerial Advisory Committee for the Prevention and Control of Cancer, where he contributes to shaping national policy. Internationally, he sits on the International Committee of the American Society for Radiation Oncology (ASTRO). He also sits on the Executive Committee of the South African Society of Clinical and Radiation Oncologists (SASCRO), is President-Elect of the Breast Interest Group of Southern Africa (BIGOSA), has co-chaired the European Society for Medical Oncology (ESMO) Africa Conference, and serves on the Editorial Board of the South African Journal of Oncology (SAJO). Within the Colleges of Medicine of South Africa, he has held roles as convenor, moderator, and examiner of the Fellowship examinations.

A widely published scholar in high-impact international journals, Prof Ramiah has also built strong global collaborations with leading institutions, including the University of Pennsylvania where he was invited to deliver a lecture in 2023 and MD Anderson Cancer Centre. His research on hypofractionation, AI-enabled radiotherapy planning, and access-expanding strategies reflects his conviction that innovation must always serve patients, particularly in resource-constrained settings.

Congratulations to Prof Farzanah Mohamed with her promotion to Adjunct Professor.

Professor is a Consultant Endocrinologist and the Acting Clinical Head of the Division of Endocrinology at Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital, University of the Witwatersrand.

She plays a key role in both undergraduate and postgraduate teaching at Wits and serves as a senior examiner and convener for the Internal Medicine

Diploma and Physician examinations for the College of Medicine of South Africa. Her passion for medical education has been recognised with prestigious honours, including the Ken Huddle Clinical Role Model Award and the FJ Milne Award.

Prof Mohamed is committed to mentorship and to nurturing the next generation of physicians and specialists. Clinically, she has a strong interest in lipidology, particularly the management of familial hypercholesterolaemia. She is actively involved in multiple clinical trials investigating novel lipid-lowering therapies, contributing to advancing care for high-risk patients.

A dedicated researcher, Prof Mohamed has published widely in national and international journals. Her work spans the intersections of endocrinology, cardiometabolic disease, and infectious disease, with a growing focus on metabolic health in diverse African populations. Beyond her clinical and academic commitments, she is a passionate advocate for empowering women in science, championing leadership, equity, and representation within academic medicine.



Honorary Renewals & Appointments

Honorary Renewals:

Associate Professor Damian Clarke
Adjunct Professor Jacques Goosen
Professor Julia Goedecke

Honorary Appointments:

Adjunct Professor Sebastian Magobotha
Associate Professor Catherine Draper

Department, Division, Unit and Research Entities News

Department of Internal Medicine Staff Achievements

Dr Jarrod Zamparini (Lecturer in the Department of Internal Medicine) has been elected as a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians (FRCP) of London.

The fellowship is one of the highest accolades in internal medicine and is conferred by senior peers of the Royal College of Physicians. It recognizes a physician's leadership and commitment to the profession as well as contributions to clinical care and education in internal medicine.

The FRCP is an internationally recognised mark of professional excellence, connecting Fellows to a global network of leading physicians committed to advancing healthcare. It also provides a platform for broader engagement in shaping clinical standards, education, and health policy.

This recognition reflects the growing relevance and impact of his work in Obstetric Internal Medicine, a field he continues to develop in South Africa through his work at Wits and the Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital.



L to R: Dr Mumtaz Patel (President of the Royal College of Physicians) & Dr Jarrod Zamparini

Prof Alisha Wade is the Director of Research in Metabolism and Endocrinology (RIME), and a Reader and Clinician Scientist in the Department of Internal Medicine. She also holds an appointment as Adjunct Associate Professor in the Division of Endocrinology, Diabetes and Metabolism at the University of Pennsylvania. She was awarded an Emerging Global Leader career development award from the Fogarty International Center of the National Institutes of Health (USA) and has published more than 80 peer-reviewed articles. Her research focuses on health inequities in endocrine and metabolic diseases.



Prof Wade is an active clinician and sees patients with endocrine diseases at the Wits Donald Gordon Medical Centre. In July 2025, she became the clinical co-Chair of the Research Affairs Core Committee of the Endocrine Society at its annual meeting in San Francisco, USA. The Endocrine Society, with over 18,000 members, is the world's largest professional organization dedicated to hormone research and clinical endocrine care. She was also elected as a Fellow of the American College of Physicians in March 2025.

Events

Colleagues,

Get ready and save the date - 2026 is bringing something big!

Our highly anticipated Physicians Update is on the horizon. Stay tuned for more details coming soon!



Academic Developments



UNIVERSITY OF THE
WITWATERSRAND
JOHANNESBURG



FACULTY OF
HEALTH SCIENCES

New 1 Year Degree

Master of Science (MSc) In Medicine in the field of Translational Research

Department of Internal Medicine, University of the Witwatersrand

Join the first cohort of students in a cutting-edge programme designed to bridge the gap between scientific breakthrough and patient benefit.

ABOUT THE PROGRAMME

- The MSc in Translational Research is the first programme of its kind in South Africa.
- It is designed to bridge the gap between laboratory discoveries and clinical application, ensuring that research translates into real-world healthcare impact.
- Students will gain the skills to navigate the full research pipeline, from basic science through clinical trials to implementation in healthcare practice.
- In a field that is expanding globally, this programme responds to the growing need for highly trained professionals, equipping graduates with a competitive edge.
- Students are exposed to cutting-edge innovations that are transforming healthcare, with a strong focus on precision medicine.
- Emphasis is placed on a multidisciplinary approach, combining expertise from medicine, life sciences, engineering, data science, and public health.
- Regulatory, ethical, and commercial considerations are also covered.
- The programme fosters collaboration, innovation, critical thinking, and effective teamwork across scientific and clinical disciplines, integrating molecular techniques with competencies in networking and research dissemination.
- It provides a clear career pathway for Honours graduates (BSc, BHSc, and related fields), preparing them for doctoral study or professional careers in research, academia, and healthcare.



APPLY NOW!

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

- A graduate who has been awarded one of the following degrees, with a minimum final year grade average of 65%:
 - Bachelor of Health Sciences with Honours
 - Bachelor of Science with Honours
- Pre-admission examination if deemed necessary.

COURSE DATES

Starting January 2026
1 Year Full-Time
Coursework completed by September 2026
Research project reports submitted by mid-December 2026
Two-week break in June

Research projects will be marked internally and externally with final submissions in May 2027
Students will graduate in July 2027.

APPLICATIONS FOR 2026 CLOSE: 31ST OCTOBER 2025

PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

As a Masters by Coursework and Research Report it will consist of two components. Coursework will constitute 70% and the Research Report 30% of the final year mark.

There are 4 modules within the coursework:

- Research Methodology (35 credits)
- Molecular Discovery to Clinical Application (40 credits)
- Introduction to Precision Medicine (20 credits)
- Translational Research in Practice (25 credits)

Research Project with Report (60 credits) will run throughout the year under the guidance of an experienced supervisor.

Lectures will be twice a week on Tuesdays and Thursdays 9am-12pm and a journal club/seminar session on Mondays. Students will be expected to engage with course material and complete their research project during the rest of the week. Anticipated class size for 2026 is 6 students.

Fees and Funding

Tuition fees and Module dates are released annually in November.
For detailed information on fees and available funding opportunities, visit:
<https://www.wits.ac.za/study-at-wits/student-fees/>

Contact us

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Division of Rheumatology

Rheumatology Masterclass

Systemic rheumatic diseases such as lupus, systemic sclerosis, rheumatoid arthritis and inflammatory myositis cause significant morbidity and mortality. These are complex multisystem autoimmune diseases that are often under- or missed diagnosed.

Wits Rheumatology hosted the 4th Rheumatology Masterclass on the 2nd of August 2025 at the Chris Hani Baragwanath Academic Hospital. The Masterclass has become a popular annual event serving as a refresher to senior medical registrars on the diagnosis and management of a spectrum of rheumatic diseases.



Rheumatologists and medical registrars at the Rheumatology Masterclass

This year 52 medical registrars from Wits and surrounding universities including SMU, UFS, UP, Limpopo, and UCT were in attendance. The registrars had a full day of bedside tutorials on invited patients with autoimmune rheumatic diseases. In addition, they participated in interactive case-based discussions and radiology stations.

The event was facilitated by 16 rheumatologists from Wits and Pretoria university. The event garnered positive feedback with registrars enjoying the focus on the clinical bedside approach to these complex rheumatic cases.

The event was convened by Dr Nirvana Bharuthram (Rheumatologist at Wits and CHBAH) and Professor Nimmisha Govind (Academic Head of Rheumatology).

Department of Family Medicine & Rural Health

Staff Achievements

Ms Aviwe Mgobozi Honoured at AMEE 2025 Conference in Barcelona

Ms Mgobozi, Head of the Clinical Associate Division, represented the University of the Witwatersrand at the prestigious AMEE Conference (International Association for Health Professions Education), held from 23 – 27 August 2025 in Barcelona, Spain.

On 26 August 2025, she delivered a presentation on her PhD research study titled “Exploring the Influence of Professional Socialization on the Professional Identity Development of Clinical Associates Using Critical Theory.” Her presentation was featured in the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity track and strongly echoed the sentiments expressed by keynote speaker Professor Evelyn Finnema, who, during the Ronald Harden Plenary on 24 August 2025, emphasized that professional identity is fundamental to the health professions.



In her presentation, Ms Mgobozi shared her preliminary findings, highlighting two key themes: navigating power structures and crafting a unique professional identity amidst role ambiguity. Her thought-provoking contribution sparked meaningful dialogue around the evolving role of Clinical Associates within health systems.

The conference concluded on a high note when Ms Mgobozi was awarded an AMEE Research Paper Award in recognition of the quality and impact of her work. This achievement marks an important milestone, not only for her doctoral journey but also for advancing scholarship in Clinical Associate education and practice.

Division of Rural Health

Experiential Rural Health Learning Visit to Bushbuckridge by the MPH Rural Health Cohort, Department of Family Medicine and Primary Care

Bushbuckridge is more than a location on the map, it is a place where rural health comes alive. From 4 - 8 of August 2025, the 2024/5 MPH Rural Health Cohort, from the Department of Family Medicine and Primary Care exchanged lecture halls for dusty roads, immersing themselves in the heartbeat of community healthcare.

The visit began with Community Health Worker (CHW) household visits. Students walked alongside CHWs as they moved from home to home, witnessing first-hand how care extends beyond clinic walls.

In each household, they saw more than patients, they saw trust, resilience, and the quiet strength of healthcare delivered at the doorstep. CHWs monitored chronic conditions, shared health education, and linked people to clinics, demonstrating the vital role of grassroots healthcare in bridging communities and formal health systems.

A highlight of the trip was a meeting with a traditional healer who spoke about her

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journey into the practice and her collaborative approach to patient care. She explained how she refers clients to biomedical facilities when conditions exceed her scope, offering a valuable example of how traditional medicine and public health can complement one another.

The exchange sparked conversations among the students about the importance of cultural competence and cross-sector collaboration in healthcare.

The final day took the group to the Wits Agincourt Research Unit, a leading hub for rural health and demographic research. There, students stepped into the world of data-driven impact, learning how decades of health and demographic surveillance shape policy, guide interventions, and influence change far beyond Bushbuckridge.

The group returned with dusty shoes, full hearts, and a deeper commitment to rural health. This was not just an opportunity to observe challenges, it was a chance to understand the resilience, innovation, and human connection that drive solutions.



Department of Surgery

Conferences & Workshops

This report highlights key outcomes from two major events in 2025: the 7th World Congress on Thyroid Cancer (WCTC) held in Boston, USA, and the 2nd Annual Conference of the Endocrine Surgeons of South Africa (ESSA) held at the University of the Witwatersrand.

7th World Congress on Thyroid Cancer (WCTC) – Boston, USA

The WCTC marked the first African representation, with participants from South Africa, Namibia, and Uganda.



L to R: Fatima Hoosain (Capetown Private, Ifongo Bombil (Wits), Fualal Jane Odubu (Uganda), Laina Liyambo (Namibia), Veronica Afework Abera (Ethiopia), Ilina Conrade (Stellenbosch)

The discussions highlighted the disparities in thyroid cancer care between high-income countries (HICs) and low- to middle-income countries (LMICs), with emphasis on the role of telehealth, molecular testing, and advanced surgical technologies. The WCTC provides a platform for African participation in setting the guidelines adjusted to African perspectives.

Advances in Diagnostics and Therapy

The availability of Molecular testing and targeted therapy were determinant factors that influence the approach to thyroid cancer in HIC vs. LMIC.

Adequate and timeous surgery retained its principal role in the management of most thyroid cancer.

Additional tools to maximise the best outcomes with the least complications were discussed such as autofluorescence technique, indocyanine green (ICG) angiogram, intraoperative nerve monitoring (IONM) and intraoperative parathormone monitoring (IOPM). Most of these stools are not yet available in Africa

The minimal access surgery for goitre was discussed with emphasis on trans-oral endoscopic thyroidectomy.

In some limited cases, RFA was considered an alternative to thyroidectomy.

Africa was strongly encouraged to participate in setting the guidelines with emphasis on adapting the international recommendations to the African context.

The recognition of the importance of continental collaboration in resource-sensitive guideline adoption has led to the creation of African collaboration on thyroid cancer (ACTC).

ESSA 2nd Annual Conference – Resources centre (University of the Witwatersrand), Johannesburg

ESSA originated from the Wits Endocrine Surgery initiative, which began with bi-monthly academic meetings, then it expanded nationwide and was formally established in 2023. ESSA First annual conference was held at Stellenbosch University in 17-18 August 2024.

The 15-16 August 2025 ESSA annual conference hosted by Prof Bombil and Dr Saloojee at the students resource centre attracted over 100 delegates and outstanding speakers both local and international from the United States, United Kingdom, Germany and Brazil aiming at strengthening the academic and professional collaboration across Africa and beyond. There was an invaluable strong institutional support from Prof Vangu (Acting Head of School of Clinical Medicine) and Prof Moeng (Academic Head of Surgery).

These two days of interactive discussions on endocrine pathologies were made possible by excellent logistical support from the information communication technology (ICT) team that ensured smooth technical operation and by the Campus security that provided safety and peace of mind to the delegates.

The conference showcased ESSA's growth since its inception in 2023 and set the stage for the third annual meeting in Cape Town in August 2026.

Both the WCTC 2025 in Boston and the ESSA 2025 conference in Johannesburg marked significant milestones in advancing thyroid and endocrine surgery in Africa. WCTC participation reinforced Africa's presence in global discourse, while ESSA's successful second conference consolidated its role as a unifying body for endocrine surgeons in the region.

The continued growth of ESSA, coupled with increased African participation in global platforms, provides momentum toward addressing disparities in endocrine cancer care and ensuring context-appropriate guideline development.

Advancing Preclinical Cancer Research in Africa: WITS-UCL Workshop

The Department of Surgery recently hosted an innovative five-day workshop (26 - 30 May 2025), co-led by Prof Pascaline Fru (WITS) and Dr Uzoamaka Okoli (UCL), and supported by a UCL-WITS Strategic Partnership Grant. The initiative responded to the growing call for African research leadership to align Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) curricula with regional research priorities and inclusive pedagogies focusing on preclinical cancer modelling.

The programme created a unique platform where scientists, clinicians, and early-career researchers could explore 3D cancer modelling, a cutting-edge approach with transformative potential for translational medicine. Attendees from WITS, North-West University, Rhodes University, University of Johannesburg, and the University of Pretoria engaged in practical sessions on 3D cell culture, including spheroid generation and data analysis.

The workshop featured thought-provoking keynote lectures from Prof. Eirini Velliou (UCL), who shared insights from a bioengineering perspective, and Dr. Felix Ikuomola (UH Mānoa/WITS), who reflected on clinical applications. Plenary speakers Dr. Niresbhi Chellan (SAMRC) and Prof. Mandeep Kaur (WITS) further underscored the relevance of preclinical models in strengthening Africa's cancer research landscape.



Beyond technical training, the event emphasised interdisciplinary collaboration. Participants took part in expert panel discussions, team projects, and proposal development, with the best team effort recognised through a Team Science Award. Industry partners, including Thermo Fisher, Merck, Lasec, and Inqaba Biotec, played a pivotal role in supporting this milestone event by showcasing 3D replated products and instrumentation.

Feedback highlighted the value of the workshop's interactive, hands-on format, with many participants noting significant learning gains and calling for future workshops. Described as both inspiring and catalytic, the workshop has laid the foundation for sustainable capacity building, skills transfer, and regional collaboration in cancer research.

Looking ahead, Prof Fru and Dr Okoli intend to extend the impact of this initiative through ongoing mentorship, online seminars, and follow-up workshops to continue to strengthen Africa's role in shaping the future of preclinical cancer modelling in STEM education.

Department of Radiation Sciences

Division of Diagnostic Radiology

Conferences

Prof Nasreen Mahomed, the Academic Head of Radiology at the University of Witwatersrand, was invited faculty at the European Society of Paediatric Radiology ESPR 59 th Annual Society Annual Meeting and 45th Post Graduate course in Romania.

Prof Mahomed is on the European Society of Paediatric Radiology Artificial Intelligence Task Force and has collaborated on several publications. She presented her talk on Artificial Intelligence in Paediatric Radiology, A South African experience. She also included her original published research. Prof Mahomed completed a Paediatric radiology fellowship in Neuroradiology and Paediatric chest at Boston Children's, Harvard University, USA previously. She has 78 peer reviewed publications, supervised 17 MMEDs to completion. She is highly respected internationally as a Paediatric trained radiologist.

Prof Mahomed also attended the World Federation of Paediatric Imaging (WFPI) Council meeting at ESPR 2025 where is she is the new Chair of the TB committee. There are a number of global Paediatric TB projects that have been approved in conjunction with WFPI and lead by Prof Mahomed.

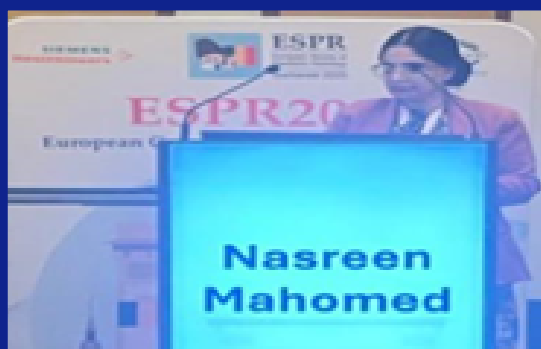
African-led efforts are shaping solutions for both local and international impact despite systemic challenges. Innovations born on the continent are increasingly being

recognized for their potential to address global health disparities, AI development equity, and sustainable radiology practice.

Disease-Specific Innovation using CT, MRI and ultrasound in diagnosing and imaging protocols and managing complications in children is gaining attention for global adaptation in condition including Paediatric TB.

Dr Radhiya Minty, third year registrar in Diagnostic Radiology department, Wits University presented her MMed research study co supervised by Prof N Mahomed and Dr N Van Wyk at ESPR congress 2025 as an oral paper and was well received. The full article has been published in South African Journal of Radiology:

<https://lnkd.in/dswXMRmK>



SAMRC/Wits Developmental Pathways for Health Research Unit (DPHRU)

Staff Achievements

Professor Lisa Micklesfield has been awarded a Networking Grant from the Academy of Medical Sciences as the overseas lead applicant to support research on understanding how lifestyle behaviours, and the context in which they take place, influence NCD-related risk and deaths.

Working with Dr Andrew Atkin from the University of East Anglia, the aim of the grant is to build a network of researchers to support greater use of wearables to measure physical behaviours and environmental factors in LMICs. We will identify the interests and priorities of network members, barriers and enablers to the use of wearable devices in different settings, and establish new collaborations to support wider use of wearables in LMIC-based projects.



Professor Micklesfield is an internationally recognised scientist (NRF B2-rated) focused

on non-communicable disease (NCD) risk across the life-course, and more specifically on how body composition (bone, muscle and fat) and physical behaviours influence disease risk, and its interplay with HIV in African populations. She is a Research Professor and Deputy Director at the SAMRC/Wits Developmental Pathways for Health Research Unit (DPHRU) at the University of the Witwatersrand.

She leads the Adulthood and Ageing research programme and is co-PI of the Middle-aged Soweto Cohort (MASC). She has published 207 papers (highest impact factor 202.7) and co-authored three chapters. Her H-indices are: Web of Science: 29, 4131 citations, Scopus: 31, 4742 citations, and Google Scholar: 43, 7627 citations.

Department of Neurosciences

Registrar Achievements

Dr Mohammed Ouweis Abdul Sattar is a Neurosurgical Registrar at the University of the Witwatersrand, based at Chris Hani Baragwanath Academic Hospital. His neurosurgical journey began under the mentorship of Professor Profyris, who was instrumental in laying the foundational principles of his training and guiding his early career steps.

Over the years, Dr Sattar has developed keen clinical and academic interests in skull base surgery, neuro-endoscopy, and vascular neurosurgery. He was part

the team that performed the first-ever endoscopic brain surgery in Malawi, and he has published in PubMed-indexed journals, in addition to presenting his work at both local and international congresses. His research path has also been supported through collaboration with Dr Labuschagne, Head of Pediatric Neurosurgery at Nelson Mandela Children's Hospital.

In August this year, Dr Abdul Sattar was selected for a World Federation of Neurosurgical Societies (WFNS) Scholarship, administered by the Continental Association of African Neurosurgical Societies (CAANS), to attend the WFNS Congress in Dubai (December 2025). His abstract was chosen as one of the Top 50 abstracts from Africa, a highly competitive distinction that underscores his academic excellence and shines a spotlight on Wits Neurosurgery's growing influence internationally.

This scholarship provides recipients with international exposure, opportunities to present research on a global stage, and a platform to network with leading neurosurgical professionals.

Founded in 2010, CAANS represents neurosurgeons across more than 50 African



nations, working in partnership with WFNS to advance neurosurgical training, research, and patient care. Its scholarship program nurtures young talent and strengthens Africa's contribution to global neurosurgery.

As he prepares to represent South Africa at the WFNS Congress, his success highlights both Wits' growing global footprint and the continent's potential to contribute to cutting-edge neurosurgical research and care.

Unit for Undergraduate Medical Education (UUME)

News

Spotlight on International Collaboration: Fulbright-Hays GPA Program visit



The School of Clinical Medicine was honoured to host at very short notice, the prestigious Fulbright-Hays Group Projects Abroad (GPA) Program, a four-week initiative funded by the U.S. Department of Education with additional support from California State University, Los Angeles. Cal State LA serves as the administrative institution for this federally supported programme, which aims to enhance the study of modern foreign languages and area studies in the United States through immersive international experiences.

This year's programme brought together scholars and students for rich intercultural exchange with the theme "Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Healing".

The guests were hosted at the Adler's Museum on the 4th of July 2025 from 3 pm and 3 lectures put together under short notice were presented to them. A particular highlight of the evening were the presentations delivered by Dr Anastasia Ugwuanyi on Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Medical Education, and Luke Invernizzi (PhD)- a

GEMP 3 student who presented his PhD research work, 'From Muthi to Modern Medicine: Bridging Traditional Knowledge and Biomedical Sciences', these both sparked engaging dialogue and thoughtful reflections. A visiting lecturer from the university of Johannesburg, Dr Leepile, also presented his thoughts on the theme.

We were especially proud of the WITS student community, represented by the WITS MSC - present and past, whose active participation and insightful engagement during the sessions exemplified the spirit of scholarly curiosity and critical thought that our institution fosters.

The programme was made even more memorable through the kind gestures of gifts from the WITS Health Sciences Library (WHSL) through Mr Devind Peter and Ms Antonia Appel, which were warmly received by the visiting delegation.

We extend our deepest appreciation to the Acting Head of School, Prof Vangu and the Assistant Dean for Teaching and Learning, Prof Paula Barnard-Ashton whose responsive and generous support on short notice ensured the seamless execution of this collaborative endeavour.

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School of Clinical Medicine Graduate Studies & Research Committee

News

Over the past several years, the Graduate Studies and Research Committee (GSRC) of the School of Clinical Medicine (SoCM) at the University of the Witwatersrand has played a pivotal role in strengthening the research and postgraduate training environment within the School. The committee has worked across multiple domains to promote academic excellence, support clinician-researchers, and ensure that the School remains at the forefront of impactful research both locally and internationally.

One of the key achievements of the GSRC has been the revitalisation of the School's digital presence. Recognising the importance of accessibility and visibility, the committee has overseen significant updates to the SoCM website. These improvements have ensured that information regarding postgraduate opportunities, research funding, ethics, and policies are easily accessible to staff and students. The website has also

become a platform for highlighting the diverse range of research conducted within the School, thereby increasing visibility for both established and emerging researchers.

Complementing this initiative, the GSRC has expanded efforts to showcase the work of researchers through the SoCM newsletter. By profiling investigators, research groups, and postgraduate students, the committee has created a platform that celebrates research achievements, fosters cross-disciplinary awareness, and highlights the School's contribution to addressing national and global health challenges. These efforts have also contributed to building a sense of community and recognition within the School, motivating young researchers to pursue academic and scientific careers.

Another important area of focus for the GSRC has been the creation and refinement of clinician-researcher pathways. The committee has recognised the challenges of balancing demanding clinical responsibilities with the pursuit of academic research. To address this, it has developed structured pathways that provide guidance, mentorship, and opportunities for clinicians interested in establishing research careers. These pathways are intended to create a sustainable pipeline of clinician scientists who can bridge the gap between clinical practice and medical research, ultimately strengthening the research capacity of the health system.

In line with global scientific trends, the GSRC has also facilitated the integration of genomic studies into the School's research portfolio. Genomics offers powerful tools for understanding disease mechanisms, tailoring treatments, and identifying risk factors at a population level. By supporting initiatives in this area, the committee has ensured that the School of Clinical Medicine remains aligned with cutting-edge methodologies, while also contributing to the growing field of genomic research in Africa.

Finally, the GSRC has played a central role in overseeing applications to the Master of Medicine (MMed) fund. This fund supports registrars undertaking the research component of their specialist training. Through careful evaluation and guidance, the committee has ensured that funding is allocated to projects that are feasible, relevant, and likely to contribute meaningfully to clinical knowledge and practice. This oversight has been critical in ensuring high standards of postgraduate research within the School.

In summary, the Graduate Studies and Research Committee has been instrumental in driving innovation, visibility, and support for researchers across the School of Clinical Medicine. Its contributions—ranging from digital transformation and researcher recognition, to the development of clinician-researcher pathways, genomic integration, and research funding oversight—have collectively strengthened the School's research ecosystem and laid the foundation for future growth and excellence.

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Committee Member

Dr Pumla Pamella Sodo is a Lecturer/coordinator in the Department of Family Medicine and Primary Care at the University of the Witwatersrand.

She holds a PhD in Public Health, a Master of Public Health, and a Postgraduate Diploma in Health Sciences Education. Her career spans academia, clinical service, and research, with meaningful contributions to curriculum development, student mentorship, and community outreach, particularly in underserved areas.



As a dedicated researcher, Dr Sodo has published widely in peer-reviewed journals, focusing on workforce dynamics, health systems resilience, and public health education. She plays an active role on several academic and professional bodies, including the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA), where she contributes to policy development, education, and regulatory standards. She is currently coordinating the MPH (Rural Health) programme and the Research Methodology module for the Honours in Health Systems Science, while also supervising both undergraduate and postgraduate student research projects.

Publication to Read

Featured Lancet Publication

Millions denied life-saving surgery as global targets missed – NIHR Global Surgery study
Two members of the Wits SOCM in the Department of Surgery, Dr Richard Crawford and Associate Professor Deirdré Kruger, have collaborated on a NIHR Global Surgery Unit study that has been published in The Lancet, titled: “Surgical health policy 2025–35: strengthening essential services for tomorrow’s needs”. (Nepogodiev et al., 2025)

The authors warn that progress towards universal access to safe, affordable surgical care is critically off track, with at least 160 million people each year unable to receive life-saving surgery— with Low- and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs) bearing the brunt of the crisis. Only 26% of LMICs are on track to meet the target of ensuring essential surgery within two hours’ reach, and none have achieved the recommended volume of 5,000 procedures per 100,000 people annually. Quality of surgical care remains a key concern, with 3.5 million adults worldwide dying within 30 days of surgery— outnumbering global HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria deaths combined—while 50 million patients suffer postoperative complications annually, including infections driving antimicrobial resistance.

The Birmingham-led NIHR Global Health Research Unit on Global Surgery highlights the urgent need to reframe surgery as a foundation of resilient health systems, develop innovative funding models, address gender and equity gaps, reduce surgical carbon footprints, and strengthen preparedness for pandemics, climate change, and conflict. The report emphasizes that scaling up essential surgeries could save lives, boost economies—by over \$80 billion annually through cancer care alone—and help achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Without urgent investment, researchers warn, millions will continue to die from treatable conditions, while fragile surgical systems remain unprepared for future global shocks.

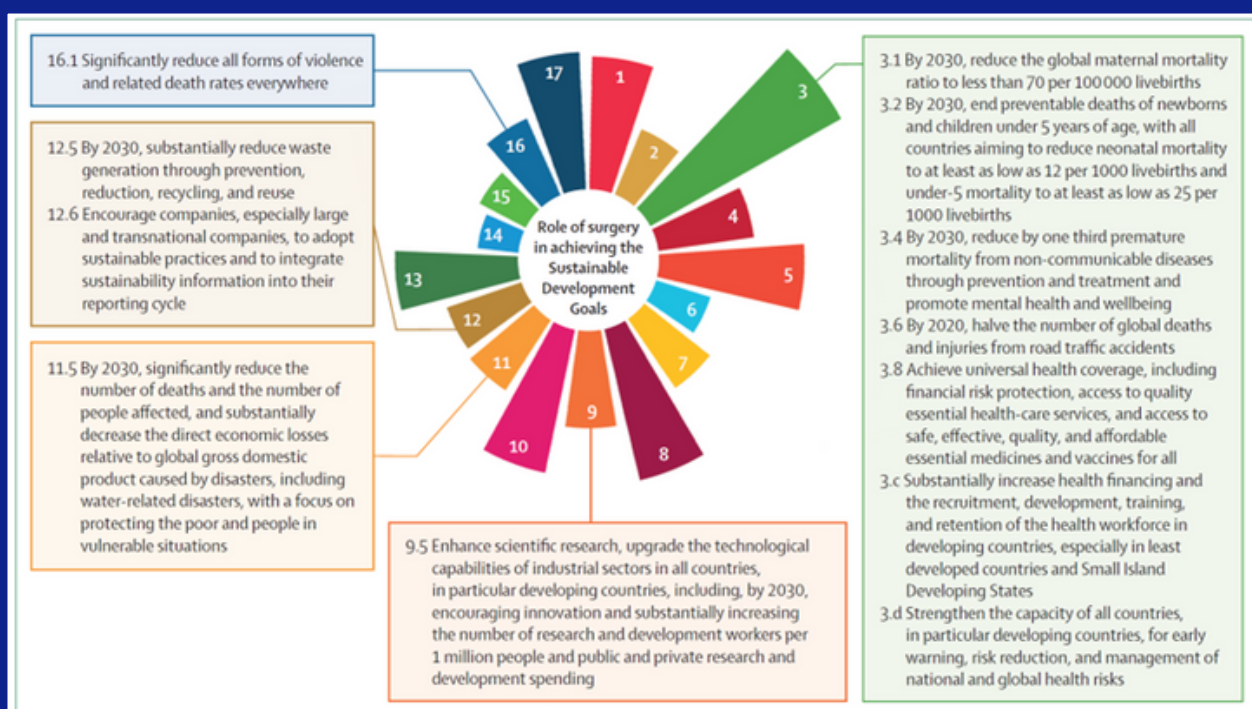


Figure 10: Role of surgery in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals

The height of each Sustainable Development Goal bar from the wheel is proportionate to the degree that surgery affects achieving that goal. The Sustainable Development Goal targets rated as most relevant to surgery are displayed.¹⁶⁴

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"Surgery is not a luxury. It is a lifesaving, cost-effective intervention that underpins resilient health systems. Without urgent investment, millions will continue to suffer and die from treatable conditions."
Senior author, Professor Aneel Bhangu, University of Birmingham

Citation:

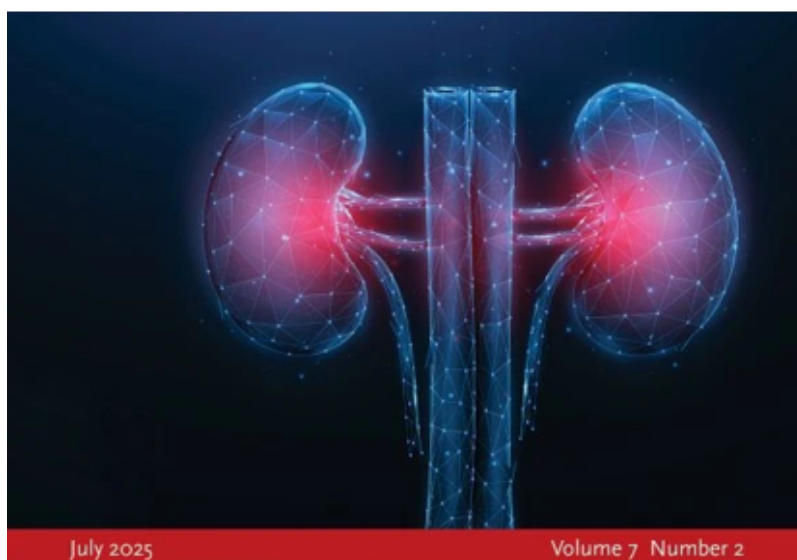
Nepogodiev, D., Picciochi, M., Ademuyiwa, A., Adisa, A., Agbeko, A. E., Aguilera, et al. 2025. Surgical health policy 2025-35: strengthening essential services for tomorrow's needs. *The Lancet*, 406, 860-880. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(25\)00985-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(25)00985-7).

For a copy of the research paper, please contact either Dr Richard Crawford (Richard.Crawford@wits.ac.za) or Prof Deirdré Kruger (Deirdre.Kruger@wits.ac.za).

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