

SCHOOL OF CLINICAL MEDICINE NEWSLETTER



EDITORIAL

Dear Staff and Students of the School of Clinical Medicine

Welcome to the new academic year, especially to those of you who are joining us for the first time – the school leavers in MBBCH 1, the Graduate Entry Medical students in Year 1, newly appointed registrars and newly appointed staff. A special welcome to Dr Doyin Ojifinni, who is joining us as the researcher in Cluster B and congratulations to Dr Philip who is our new Academic Head of the Division of Clinical Haematology. You are now part of the SOCM family and I wish you welcome.



Some of our senior staff members are retiring – Prof Girish Modi (HOD Neurosciences), Prof Gail Scher (Head of Paediatric Neurology) and Prof Jeanine Vellema (HOD Forensic Medicine). We wish them well in the next phase of their lives and hope they will maintain strong links with the School.

2022 is the Centenary of the University of the Witwatersrand – we have a whole year of celebrations planned, including a wellness week, book launch, Wits rag, “Free People’s concert” and much more. The highlight will be a “Homecoming weekend” in the October alumni week where we welcome our diaspora back to their alma mater. Look out for the planned events and please support Wits.

I wish you a happy and productive year ahead.

Prof Daynia Ballot
Head of School



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STAFF RETIREMENTS

Thank you to Professor Girish Modi, Adjunct Professor Jeanine Vellema and Adjunct Professor Gail Scher for your contribution and hard work. Your commitment helps making the School successful and it has not gone unnoticed!



PROFESSOR GIRISH MODI

Professor Girish Modi is a “Witsie” with a career spanning over three to four decades as a clinician, mentor, teacher and researcher.

Herewith is a brief glance at his academic journey.

He studied at Wits in the heydays of apartheid. Memories of separate dissection halls, separate rest and recreation facilities, separate clinical training and injustices still linger.

There were then few if any black role models, and there were certainly no pathways for development for ‘black Witsies’. Encouraged by a deep desire to excel instilled in him by his family he continued his training after his MBChB and went to the United Kingdom where he obtained a Master’s degree in Neurochemistry with distinction and followed this with a Doctorate in Philosophy in the then still evolving discipline of Molecular Neuroscience. He returned to South Africa and completed his Neurology training in Durban. He then returned to his home at the Chris Hani Baragwanath hospital.



This followed teaching and research awards (Bothwell Research Award, Philip Tobias Teaching Award), Fellowship of the Royal College of London, and promotion to Associate Professor, and then Professor, Chair and Head of Neurology at Wits and Chief Specialist Neurologist at the Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic hospital.

He runs the largest Neurology training department in South Africa with an active and vibrant department that has seen a myriad of Neurology graduates, Masters graduates and PhD graduates.

His publications relate to HIV Neurology, Nano-Neurology and Stroke. He has strong interests in Headache and Multiple Sclerosis. Innovative research interests include Regeneration after Spinal Injury (XII Prestigious Research Lecture of the Wits Faculty of Health Sciences) and the Genetics of Mild Androgen Insensitivity syndrome (MAIS). He has over 130 mostly international publications in prestigious neurology journals with numerous book chapters. He has presented and chaired at a multitude of local and international conferences. He is a principal and co-principal on several grants and

patents. He serves and has served on the boards of many neurology-related NGO's and as an Adhoc consultant to many Pharmaceutical companies. His work falls into the domain of the clinician-scientist.

He has now served almost three sessions as Academic Head of Neurosciences.

During his Wits tenure, he served on numerous committees including the Equal Opportunities Committee, Postgraduate Committee, Truth and Reconciliation Committee, Staffing and Promotions Committee, and has been a member of the Senate and Faculty Boards.

In the South African Neurology fraternity, he served as President and Vice President of the Neurology Association of South Africa (NASA). He also served as Senator and member of the College of Neurology over the past two decades convening all the Johannesburg exams. He represented South African Neurology at the World Federation of Neurology (WFN) during his tenure as President of NASA. He hosted numerous outstanding Neurology Association Congresses including the first Virtual NASA Congress.

Professor Modi has an unassuming personality and is a highly astute neurologist with a strong passion for his work and family. He is known for his disciplined and sometimes demanding dedication to clinical work and patient care. He has an obsession for art, cars, and soccer. He is noted for his sense of humour.

He is married to Professor Mala Modi, a radiologist. They have two lovely daughters Meela and Mishca.

ADJUNCT PROFESSOR JEANINE VELLEMA

Prof Jeanine Vellema was jointly appointed as Head: Clinical Department (GDoH) and Head of the Wits Academic Department of Forensic Medicine and Pathology in 2008.

She served on numerous Wits Faculty of Health Sciences Committees and in 2009, she was elected as Chairperson of the Wits FHS Professional and Ethical Standards Committee (PESC), which she Chaired until 2020. She also served as Chairperson of the Wits Health Sciences Library Committee and as a member of the Wits Senate Library Committee from 2013 to 2020. She has been lecturing to Medical and Law students for the past 31 years and was actively involved in the updating and development of undergraduate, postgraduate and mid-level health-



worker (Forensic Pathology Support Officers) academic training curriculums.

She strived to establish a research-orientated Academic Department and developed postgraduate research PhD, MSc and Honours in Forensic Sciences programs, which commenced through her Department in 2011.

She has performed more than 10 000 medicolegal death investigations during her career and has appeared as Expert Witness and Assessor in numerous Court Cases, since the beginning of her postgraduate training in Forensic Medicine in 1990. Prior to that, she worked as a full-time District Surgeon in Johannesburg for one year, attending to the examination of and forensic evidence collection in hundreds of rape victims and drivers arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol.

She has been a bi-annual Examiner, Convenor and/or Moderator for the Colleges of Medicine of South Africa (CMSA) since 1999 and has served as President of the College of Forensic Pathologists, on the CMSA Senate and Board, and on the CMSA Examinations and Credentials Committee, since 2002. In addition, she has personally trained numerous postgraduate candidates preparing for their CMSA Diploma- and Fellowship Examinations in Forensic Medicine and Pathology. She also revised and rewrote the Regulations of the College of Forensic Pathologists, pertaining to both the Fellowship and Diploma Examinations, including splitting the Diploma in Forensic Medicine Examination into separate Clinical and Pathological components.

She served on the National Forensic Pathology Services Committee (NFPSC) (now a Statutory Ministerial Advisory Committee) since the transfer of the Forensic Pathology Service to the NDoH in 2006. During 2015, she was re-appointed as a member of the NFPSC by the Minister of Health, when she was elected by the Committee members to serve as Deputy Chair.

She has been an author and co-author of several academic-, legislative-, policy- and guideline publications including scientific journal articles and chapters in textbooks. As a member of the National Forensic Pathology Services Academic and Professional Advisory Subcommittee (2002 – 2011), she contributed significantly in co-authoring and editing a “National Code of Guidelines for Forensic Pathology Practice in South Africa”, as well as in the drafting of the “Regulations” to the National Health Act regarding Forensic Pathology Services in South Africa and the proposed new DHA 1663 (Notice of Death / Stillbirth) Forms, for the Department of Home Affairs.

She served on a SAQA task team during 2006 to develop a National Qualification for the Forensic Pathology Support Officer and was elected in June 2006 to serve on the SAQA Forensic Science Standards Generating Body as an Executive Committee member. This (3 year) Forensic Pathology Support Diploma was initially approved and Gazetted on 23 February 2007. During 2014 – 2015, she served on a National Education and Training Working Group (appointed by the then National DDG of Health, Dr Terence Carter), to revive the curriculum development of the National Qualification for the Forensic Pathology Support Officer. She also served on a HPCSA Board of Medical Technologists Subcommittee towards developing the appropriate

HPCSA registers for Forensic Pathology Officers (FPO's) and towards accreditation of this FPO Qualification with the HPCSA, through the development of appropriate 'Scope of Profession' and 'Scope of Practice' documents.

Internationally, she served on the Board of Scientific Advisors of the "International Forensic Centre of Excellence (INFORCE) for the Investigation of Genocide", headed by Mark Viner, based in the United Kingdom at the Cranfield Forensic Institute of Cranfield University, and has co-authored several chapters in the production of Standard Operating Procedures for this organization.

She has also been an invited International Corresponding Member of the National Association of Medical Examiners: USA (NAME USA), since 2018.

In her 'joint staff' GDoH appointed role as Head: Clinical Department, she headed up the medical management of eight (8) Southern Cluster Forensic Pathology Service (FPS) Medicolegal Mortuary Facilities, where upwards of 16 000 medicolegal death investigations are performed annually. During 2012, she successfully motivated for, conceptualised and co-designed a new Johannesburg FPS Facility, which is currently under construction and close to completion, behind Helen Joseph Hospital.

As a project near and dear to her, she initiated and developed a Wits Human Decedent Identification Unit in 2016, for humanitarian, scientific and medicolegal purposes, which is run through the Johannesburg FPS Facility and WITS University FHS and managed by WITS appointed Forensic Scientists. The success of this Unit is ascribed to strong mutual collaborations with the Wits School of Anatomical Sciences, the SAPS Victim Identification Centre (VIC), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Gauteng DoH Forensic Pathology Service.

WELCOME TO NEW STAFF

A warm welcome to Dr Doyin Ojifinni as Cluster Researcher - Cluster B



Dr Ojifinni is a Community Medicine Specialist with a PhD in Public Health and a Fellowship of the West African College of Physicians (Community Health).

She has more than 17 years of clinical experience in both private and public sectors, about 10 of which have been in the Public Health space.

She has taught at Undergraduate and Masters level, supervised Masters research and mentored Resident Doctors and PhD students.

Her research experience includes qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods studies in maternal and child health, gender-based violence



and elder abuse.

More recently, she has worked with teams exploring the prevention of women cancers and elimination of silicosis in the mining and non-mining industries in South Africa. She is well-published, has presented at local, regional and international conferences and peer-reviewed articles for journal publications.

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STAFF ACHIEVEMENTS

CONGRATULATIONS TO:

Prof Georgia Demetriou's appointment as Academic Division Head - Medical Oncology

Dr Vinitha Philip's appointment as Academic Division Head - Clinical Haematology (see page 3)

Dr Joel Francis (Senior Researcher - Department of Family Medicine) with your NRF-C2 rating

Dr Cornelius Ewuoso (Senior Lecturer - Steve Biko Centre for Bioethics) received an award grant from the Wellcome Trust.

DR VINITHA PHILIP

Dr Vinitha Philip received her MD degree from University Centre for Health Sciences, Yaounde, Cameroon and moved to South Africa in 1991.

She qualified as a Clinical Haematologist in 2002 and has been practising at Chris Hani Baragwanath Academic Hospital from 1991, coming up the ranks to be Acting Head of the Clinical Haematology unit. Her main areas of interest are TTP, Haemophilia and especially acquired Haemophilia as well as Haematological Malignancies. She has 14 publications on HIV and lymphomas and HIV and TTP.



She teaches at undergraduate and postgraduate levels and is an examiner for Clinical Haematology fellowship exams and MMed examiner for both Physicians and Haematology Pathologists. She is a member of the Provincial Blood and Lab users committee and belongs to various Haematological societies.

She is involved in numerous international, multicentre trials as well as collaborating with Johns Hopkins School of Medicine conducting trials on patients with HIV and Lymphomas.

LONG SERVICE AWARDS CEREMONY

Well done to the following staff who received Long service awards from the Faculty of Health Sciences in 2021:

5 Years

Miss Kelebogile Mabokela
Mr Mpho Baisitse
Miss Nabeela Sujee
Miss Sonja Louw
Dr Stuart Pattinson
Dr Craig Keyes
Dr Gonaseelan Naidoo
Miss Josephine Zondo
Mrs Lefentse Mapaisa
Miss Lizeka Tandwa
Dr Maxwell Jingo
Mr Matimba Maluleke

10 Years

Prof Richard Cooke
Mr Scott Smalley
Prof Lisa Micklesfield

15 Years

Mrs Tholakele Nkosi
Prof Raquel Duarte
Mrs Lydia Mokoena
Miss Kgaogelo Sodi
Mrs Dyanadree Subroyen

20 Years

Miss Rogene Beukes
Prof Juan Scribante

25 Years

Miss Ethel Moledi

35 Years

Prof Anna Kramvis

The following retired staff were recognised for their service:

Mrs Muriel Ndlovu (20 years)

Mrs Yvonne Kotane (18 years)

Ms Nomvuselelo Perrie (16 years)

Dr Stanislava Ciric (9 years)

Prof Paul Ruff (39 Years)



WITS COVID-19 HEROES

TRIUMPH FOR MANDELA AND CASTRO MEDICAL PROGRAMME 13 DECEMBER 2021 - WITS UNIVERSITY

YOU ARE
AMAZING

Wits Covid-19 Heroes support the vision to increase doctors from historically disadvantaged areas.

Pumla Mofokeng is one of the “mothers” who keeps a caring eye on the 301 medical students some of whom are scattered across facilities in Gauteng and the North West.

It is a job, even when easy, that requires making sure the students of the Nelson Mandela, Fidel Castro (NMFC) medical programme have enough to eat and that there is nothing that will distract them from that goal of being “day one ready” for



their medical internship.

There are times when the job even requires helping a student with their personal problems such as in March last year when everything was turned upside down. Covid-19 struck and South Africa went into a hard lockdown. With this came enormous challenges, but through true grit determination and teamwork, the students were able to continue studying towards the goal of graduating and taking up a medical internship.

These medical students that end up at Wits are part of a programme that was born out of an agreement between Mandela and Castro in 1996, that aimed to address the shortage of doctors in South Africa's rural areas. Across South Africa, qualified students are given the opportunity to study medicine in Cuba, paid for by the government.

It is a five-year long course and once the students return to South Africa they enter an 18-month programme run by several universities that aim to integrate them into the local health care system. It is a programme that will see them going through short rotations at various health care facilities. With this comes the logistics of paying for and organising transport and accommodation.

"Then Covid came along and we had to go into blended learning," explains Mofokeng, the administrator coordinator in the NMFC programme. Blended learning involves using online teaching with more traditional classroom methods.

But there were also other more immediate problems. As South Africa went into a hard lockdown students were asked to vacate their residences. The staff worked hard to find alternatives that would enable students to study whilst keeping an eye on their well-being.

As the other students dispersed across the country the challenge was allowing them to continue to study. They had to be provided with data and those who didn't have tablets or laptops were catered for via the Wits laptop loan bank. Whatsapp became a teaching tool, but for many internet connectivity was a problem.

The varying ICT infrastructure also required 'open' communication between students, administrative and academic staff.

In the front line making it all happen, says Mofokeng was the director of the NMFC programme, Professor Richard Cooke.

When the hard lockdown ended and South Africa moved to level two, the students were allowed to return. Now came the task of having to work and learn in a world still gripped by a pandemic. At the various living quarters, Wifi had to be upgraded so that students could now access the internet from their rooms and not in common areas such as computer labs which were now functioning under Covid regulations.

“Bedside learning and classroom learning was now limited to small numbers,” says Dr Anastasia Ugwuanyi, a coordinator and lecturer within the NMFC. “When it came to assessments we had to try a lot of things, we had to do hybrid examinations, where students would link in with Microsoft Teams, while an examiner was present. There was a lot of innovation.”

Both staff and students had to learn to access classes online.

For Ugwuanyi it meant lots of organising and endless meetings. “I literally got to a point where I felt like my butt was stuck to a chair,” she laughs.

After a while students and staff got the hang of the new way of teaching. And as South Africa nears the two-year anniversary of that first lockdown, many of the innovations that were introduced are set to stay. One of these are the online night tutorials, that students can access wherever they are currently stationed in health care facilities across Gauteng and North West.

“Online learning does achieve a lot more, students are now able to use resources they would never have been introduced to if this hadn't happened,” says Ugwuanyi.

Now that it is the end of the year exams have been written and one class is set to graduate. However, for Mofokeng and Ugwuanyi there are still students to look after as the programme continues to implement the shared vision between the two countries. “The students know that I and Dr A (Ugwuanyi) are mothers to them. They know they can come to us for anything,” says Mofokeng.

SINGING AND DANCING IN HOSPITAL LIFTS SPIRITS

11 DECEMBER 2021 - WITS UNIVERSITY

Rheumatologist takes an innovative approach to managing Covid-19.

Sometimes you just need to dance, to sing and to create – because living is much more than having a pulse and a heartbeat.

This is what went through Dr Kavita Makan's mind when the clinical head of the Covid Medical Response Unit at Chris Hani Baragwanath hospital said yes to getting the



largest hospital in the country on board for the “Jerusalema Challenge” in the middle of 2020.

“We had just come out of the first wave and I felt that we needed to do something uplifting, find a bit of escapism, something outside of medicine.

“When we put the call out we thought maybe 50 people would sign up, but in the end we had close to 250 people,” she says.

Makan, a lecturer in the Department of Internal Medicine and Physician Rheumatologist, has been lauded as one of the Wits Covid-19 Heroes for several initiatives at Bara and surrounding hospitals.

The production that she and her team created was in the end a polished eight-minute celebration to the catchy Master KG hit, and a salute to healthcare workers from across the Bara community and a shout-out to a hospital that embodies the spirit of Soweto that pumps like an engine room. It has had over 156 000 views! Watch Bara #Jerusalem Challenge.

“There was such camaraderie - it was really a unifying project and a way of introducing Bara to the rest of the world - because there is nowhere else on the planet like it – it beats to its own drum,” she says.

For Makan, Covid shone a spotlight on the significance of science and medicine but it also came as a reminder that behind these disciplines are people. And what some of these people have been through, who have had to carry an unimaginable burden of grief and loss – including breaking devastating news to patients’ families over and over again. She’s understood too that healthcare workers have had to face their own fears and anxieties in a time of uncertainty. For her these past few months have been about recognising these human needs, also managing everyone’s expectations and harnessing their strengths while sidestepping their weaknesses.

“As a leader you try to be in control but also relatable, it has been very hard because Covid is not what you imagine you’d ever experience in your lifetime as a doctor.

A core group of friends and colleagues who understand her work have been invaluable during this period. “You go through the worst of days and the best of days together – celebrating and commiserating together,” she says.

It has helped that her approach has been to look at solutions through innovation, also to trust in herself and her staff. For instance, it was Makan’s networking abilities and professional standing (she’s the current president of the South African Rheumatism and Arthritis Association - SARAA)



that made it possible for her to get an international film and documentary producer to edit and produce the “Bara Jerusalema Challenge”; also to lean on a pharmaceutical giant to donate doses of the drug Tocilizumab (TCZ), an expensive biologic agent that has been essential in fighting inflammation in Covid patients at Bara. “We hope to publish results on the outcomes of the patients who’ve received this therapy as we utilised a non-standardised regimen, based on limited access.”

Makan has set up debriefing sessions for her colleagues – dubbed Covid Confidentials, a pandemic playback, which included input from a psychologist and life coach; initiated COVID-19 treatment protocols; designed templates for more efficient admissions processes to get patients to the correct units as fast as possible and improved communication channels with the Nasrec field hospital when it was operating, and more recently the ABT (alternative building technology) facility to ensure patient transfers were carried out without glitches. “We’ve had great collaboration between all our specialist units within the hospital as well as with our surrounding centres, through effective communication and mutual understanding.” She also set up a teaching programme for junior doctors. It includes weekly tutorials and discussions to keep the doctors on track with their academic programmes even as they have been pulled in to be part of the all-hands-on-deck emergency teams as successive Covid waves have unfolded.

In the rheumatology space, Dr Makan has been pivotal in informing practice during the COVID pandemic for rheumatologists and their patients, through the development of national management and vaccination guidelines, as well the establishment of a national COVID-19 rheumatology database in collaboration with international rheumatology organisations as part of the global rheumatology alliance. “Even though I have dedicated much time in the past year and a half to managing COVID-19 at Bara, I still have to ensure that the advancement of the science and practice of rheumatology in South Africa is on an upward trajectory.”

This includes regular lectures and academic presentations to the medical community, the establishment of national guidelines for rheumatic disease and improving access to specialised treatments for her patients, all the while pursuing her PhD in her main area of interest: systemic lupus erythematosus.

She acknowledges that the peaks of waves “can be all-consuming”. But she jokes that the best part of being so busy is that she is no longer a TV series binge-watcher. “I was that person; so I’m quite proud of myself for watching so much less TV these days,” she says.

But she still believes in the reprieve of a bit of escapism and for Makan it’s in art, fashion, writing, music and creating. Many of these interests she gets to combine and express in projects like her SARAA publication, NewsRheum. For the other interests there’s retail therapy that she admits is a guilty pleasure.

There’s also spending time with her family, especially her four-year-old who she had to prepare for pre-primary school during the pandemic.

Ultimately it’s to look at things as a journey. She says: “I love when an idea becomes a

project and is something that I get to see through to the end. That's how I draw energy to keep on finding dynamism and innovation to try to find solutions in the worst situations," she says.



TEACHING AND MEDICINE – A PERFECT BLEND AGAINST COVID-19

8 DECEMBER 2021 - WITS UNIVERSITY

Two disciplines have paved the way for Dr Hartmann to make an impact on the lives of others.

Dr Carol Hartmann who has been nominated as a Wits Covid-19 Hero is thrilled and humbled to be recognised amongst the stars who were, and continue to be, instrumental in the success of the Faculty of Health Sciences, and ultimately Wits University.



Hartmann played a pivotal role in the re-designing of the Learning Management System (LMS) to adapt to the demands of remote learning at the onset of Covid. Using her background in curriculum design and e-learning, she supported fellow academics in adjusting to the new medium of teaching and learning, ensuring continuity of the academic programme.

Her work did not stop there. Acutely aware of the socio-economic dynamics of South Africa, including the gaps in infrastructure development, Hartman advocated for students and set up various intervention systems to support students. This includes a student tracking programme to identify those suddenly at academic risk; initiating a Summer boot camp and catch-up sessions for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

These efforts benefited the students and led to improved academic success for many of the students.

Hartmann credits colleagues and students for the milestones achieved.

“The work that was done was really a team effort with the staff of the Centre for Health Sciences Education, Unit for Undergraduate Medical Education (UUME) and E-Fundanathi as well as academic colleagues,” says Hartmann.

“The students also have shown incredible resilience under difficult conditions,” says Hartmann who also coordinates the first and second year of the MBBCh programme in the UUME.

“They have risen to the challenges brought about by the abrupt change in how they must learn. It has been difficult for them, especially with the need to attend to personal challenges as well as those that occur in the academic space. Their motivation and hard work during this time has been inspiring.”

The past months have been challenging but also a time to discover one’s abilities, remarks Hartmann.

“I’ve learnt that we are more capable than we sometimes think we are. If I look back at what we have achieved over the past two years, many of us would have said it was impossible and yet we did it. I’ve also learnt that there are many different solutions for a problem.”

This, however, does not come as a complete surprise as human beings are a remarkable creation and it is this that attracted her to occupation. From a young age, she was very interested in the structure and function of the human body.

“Initially, I was interested in studying physiotherapy but work shadowing my father, a paediatrician, and his colleagues shifted my interest to medical practice.”

She completed her medical degree in 2004 at the University of Cape Town. She spent time working as a medical officer in neonatology and surgery before pursuing her passion for education taking up a position in the School of Anatomical Sciences at Wits where she taught systemic and regional anatomy for nine years before moving to the UUME.

Moving into teaching was a natural progression and something in her DNA. “My mother was a teacher and she also inspired me. Throughout my University studies, I had tutored and enjoyed helping people learn. This combined with my interest in the human body led me to a lecturer position in the Anatomical Sciences where I developed a passion for education and curriculum design.”

Wearing many hats, one wonders if she has time for anything else. “Time with family and friends, especially getting out into nature, is invaluable. Building Lego is also very therapeutic. With so many tasks to do, I’ve also learnt the value of being present and making the most of the time I have with family and friends. Although that is still a skill I am working on.”

With the new year around the corner and the pandemic constantly challenging the way we live, Hartmann is upbeat and encourages staff to garner their strength.

“There will be a lot to be done and often times it will seem insurmountable. Celebrate how far we have already come and what we have achieved and allow that to spur you on to tackle the next small step in doing things better.”

In her tireless service of not only her unit but the entirety of the Wits and academic community to successfully adapt and complete a covid filled year, Dr Hartmann is clearly a champion and an integral player in driving #WitsForGood.

LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND 19 NOVEMBER 2021 - WITS UNIVERSITY

Mr Scott Smalley was instrumental in the safe return of students and staff, and the vaccination drive on campus.

The sudden strike of the COVID-19 pandemic presented an urgent need for crisis management and solid leadership to navigate organisations through “the new normal”.

Scott Smalley, the Head of the Division of Clinical Associates, at the Wits Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS), is nominated as one of the Wits Covid-19 Heroes for his leadership throughout the pandemic, particularly in the initial stage of the “the unknown”.



Only a week after the first COVID-19 case was reported in South Africa, Wits University also reported its first case in the School of Clinical Medicine (SOCM).

Smalley became part of an informal group of leaders to develop the FHS COVID-19 Staff and Student Handbook. The guidelines quickly became an essential reference for members for protocols to help minimise the spread of the virus.

To ensure the accessibility of the handbook, he reached out to various colleagues within the University such as the marketing team and the Wits App and SAKAI helpdesks who assisted by digitising the tool. “Once I had the structure in place and sections build, I reached out to my colleagues in the FHS logistics team and beyond to start including content. Richard Cooke was invaluable for the Testing and Screening Section, Clinical Training Section and PPE information” says Smalley.

He stepped in as the Chair of the FHS Logistics Planning Team which was formed to act as an overall structure and central point of command in managing the effects of the pandemic on the Faculty. The handbook became an instrumental tool for the team in the phased-in return of over 6000 Faculty students and staff after the level 5 lockdown. “To date, this team is one of my proudest community accomplishments,” says Smalley.

Together with the Head of Department of Family Medicine and Primary Care, Adjunct Professor Richard Cooke, Smalley co-authored the “Return to Campus Guidelines” for clinical students. The guideline document was adopted as a template by the Ministries of Health and Higher Education and Training, respectively. It was used for clinical students nationwide to reengage in clinical training.

“This document presented various risk mitigated options with multiple variable considerations for how to re-integrate the clinical students safely within the hospital clinical platform in the midst of rising COVID-19 patient case, for both training and service” explains Smalley.

Furthermore, to address the shortage of health care workers during the pandemic, he recommended the implementation of the FHS Volunteer Programme which matched faculty students with healthcare facilities to provide clinical and/or non-clinical tasks.

More than 692 students registered to volunteer, 425 of whom were placed at 30 host sites. Their placements in community health centres provided both direct and indirect patient care to South Africans as a response to COVID-19.

“The past 18 months is unprecedented with challenges, but also affords opportunities for service, collaboration, breaking down barriers, and growing stronger as a Faculty, Department and Division. I am proud of the contributions I am making to the Wits Community in response to COVID-19 and will continue to lend a hand where needed” says Smalley.

Smalley has played a key role in initiatives to protect staff and students by organising accessible vaccination sites.

About Wits Covid-19 Heroes

The Wits Heroes Series celebrates staff and students who went beyond the call of duty at the onset of Covid-19 in 2020. Wits Heroes were nominated by members of the Wits community. Discover other Heroes. <https://www.wits.ac.za/covid19/wits-covid-19-heroes/>

thank
you

FACULTY HONOURS CELEBRATION - SERVICE AWARD



From L to R: Pro Lindelani Mnguni, Mr Rami Tseki and Prof Shabir Madhi

Congratulations to Mr Rami Tseki who is one of the recipients of the Service Awards at the recent Faculty Honours Celebration.

'Recipient: Mr Ramajwe (Rami) Tseki Rami has been employed by the Department of Internal Medicine since 2004. He has dedicated his work life to the department - he has worked tirelessly over the years under the leadership of many Academic Heads and it is noted that he always comes through with whatever tasks one requests of him.

Rami currently works in the capacity of a Senior Technician. During the Covid-19 pandemic, he went the extra mile to make sure our working space was safe for staff and students to return.

Recently, with the Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital fire, he helped sort out several issues with the department, and went the extra mile for staff and students. Whenever there is a problem such as a major hospital water leak or a power outage in the offices and labs, Rami sorts them out and even comes out after hours, on weekends and in the evenings, if the situation calls for it.

When asked to do something, and there is a hurdle, he will come up with suggestions for solutions rather than giving up easily.'

Other Special acknowledgements for service excellence:

Ms Rita Kruger (Clinical Medicine)
Ms Mignon Coetzee (UUME)
Mr Aaron Maduna (UUME)



SCHOOL GRADUATE STUDIES & RESEARCH NEWS

2022 MMED FUNDING

The School of Clinical Medicine call for 2022 MMed funding is open. Please note the 2022 deadlines:

28 February 2022

31 May 2022

31 August 2022

30 September 2022

Kindly liaise with Boipelo.Kgosinkwe@wits.ac.za or Rita.Kruger@wits.ac.za for the guidelines and application form.

RESEARCHER PROFILE: DR EVELYN N LUMNGWENA

She is a Researcher Scientist and Research Coordinator of MMed Research for Cluster C, School of Clinical Medicine, since October 2021.

Dr Lumngwena obtained a PhD in Molecular and Cellular biology, from the University of Cape Town (UCT) during which she studied the mechanisms of HIV viral transmission across a healthy female genital mucosa.

Following her PhD, Dr Lumngwena joined the Cape Heart Institutes as an investigator on a project aimed at understanding the molecular pathogenesis of Rheumatic valvular heart diseases (RHD) in South Africa. Her project, which aimed at understanding basic mechanisms of RHD progression span from differential protein expression, profiling autoimmune proteins in heart tissues and blood of RHD and the role of the microbiome in RHD progression. Moreover, she is trying to identify different autoimmune molecules in blood and heart tissues that drive RHD progression.



Dr Lumngwena is excited by Inflammation, in both infectious, autoimmune and chronic diseases. Research engagement includes Translational cardiovascular research including proteomics, biomarkers and other small molecules, microbiome and role of other co-morbidities in Rheumatic heart disease, Autoimmune mechanisms in RHD, Viral infections, inflammation, Immune responses and vaccines.

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DATE FOR THE NEXT GSRC GENERAL MEETING

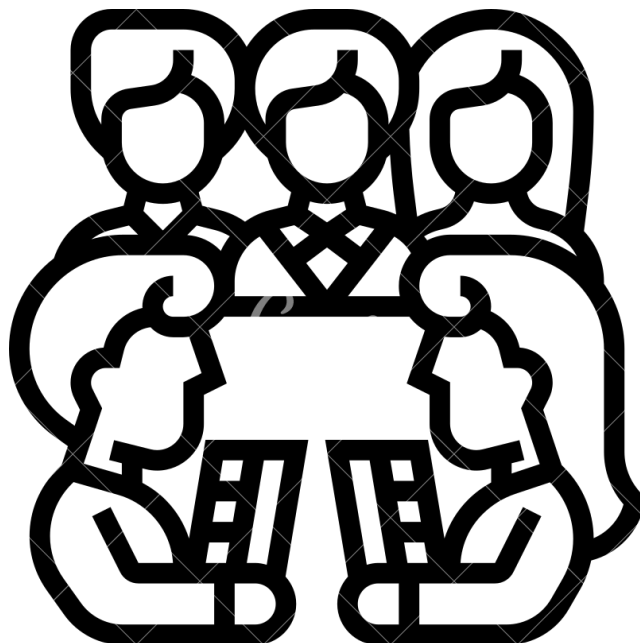
The next GSRC General Meeting date will be on Monday 11 April 2022 at 13h00.



GSRC EXCO MEMBERS

Our GSRC EXCO members for 2022 are:

Ziyaad Dangor (Co-Chair)
Deirdre Kruger (Co-Chair)
Josh Ndlangamandla
Nadia Guidozi
Nazeer Chopdat
Gail Scher
Joel Frances
Boipelo Kgosinkwe
Evelyn Lumngwena
Brenda Kagodora
Boitumelo Phakathi
Alex van Blydenstein
Maxwell Jingo
Ekene Emmanuel Nweke
Anica Venter
Robyn Charlton
Oludoyinmola Ojifinni



WITS JOURNAL OF CLINICAL MEDICINE

The Wits Journal of Clinical Medicine is a peer-reviewed, Open Access scientific research journal published triennially, and was established to provide a forum to showcase scientific research from the School of Clinical Medicine at the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg as well as from other institutions nationally and internationally. Please note that Volume 3, Issue 3, November 2021 is now available online.

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Prof Pravin Manga (Editor)



SUBMISSION OF CONTENT

The newsletter will be published bimonthly and we welcome all content, staff (academic & professional) achievements, profiles, and student events and achievements. Photos are always welcome. Should you wish to submit any content for publication, kindly send it to: Rita.Kruger@wits.ac.za by 25 March 2022.

*(Please note that due to space restrictions content may be edited)