HEALTH COMMUNICATION RESEARCH UNIT

2018 ANNUAL REPORT
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It is time to reflect on another year of research, achievements and productivity in the Unit, and 2018 has been no exception.

We were deeply saddened by the untimely death of our long-time Unit Director, Prof. Claire Penn, in July. Claire contributed much to developing the field of health communication in this country and the many tributes which poured in from local and international colleagues attest to her significant contribution both academically and personally. She will be sorely missed. The focus of much of this year has been on adjusting to Claire's absence and sorting out her affairs as we forge ahead with the work of the Unit.

Despite a turbulent year, there were a number of highlights worth celebrating. The Unit was able to maintain its focus on quality conference and publication outputs, as evidenced by the prizes awarded to a number of presented papers as well as the commendations received for most citations in the Faculty. Pleasingly, we were able to achieve similar output levels to those of 2017. Two postgraduate students completed their degrees. We were able to strengthen existing local and international partnerships and establish new opportunities for collaboration.

Some staffing developments include the following: Megan Scott’s appointment came to an end in March of this year as she decided to concentrate on her PhD studies. Johanna Beukes was awarded her MA (Res Psych) degree and submitted her PhD proposal. Zamokuhle Thwala was awarded her MA (Res Psych) degree and joined the team as a research assistant.

During 2018, we continued to pursue research thrusts in a number of areas of interest. The Wellcome Trust-funded Blood Sugars project reached its end although we continue to work on publications and conference papers in this field. The NRF-funded Emergency Medicine project continues, in collaboration with the Emergency Medicine department at UCT and colleagues at ER24. Our collaboration with the Aurum Institute and the ACT4TB/HIV network continues through the work of one of our postgraduate students who is a SANTHE Research Fellow.

As I take over the reins of directorship of the Unit, I look forward to exploring new opportunities for collaboration and networking with a particular focus on the African context, for example through the newly formed Global Health Communication initiative and our involvement in the Wits/Ghana ARUA NCD CoE.

I would like to extend my gratitude to the Assistant Deans for Research (Prof. Brett Bowman and Prof. Hlonipha Mokoena) as well as the School Research Committee Chairs (Prof. Sumaya Laher and Prof. Maria Marchetti-Mercer) for their assistance and support in facilitating the transition in leadership of the Unit. I would also like to thank the HCRU staff, postgraduate students and collaborators for their ongoing support of the work of the Unit and their hard work during 2018.
IN MEMORIUM

Professor Emeritus Claire Penn passed away peacefully on 21 July 2018 after a long illness. Claire dedicated a significant portion of her life - 44 years - to the University, and was Director of the Unit since its inception in 2004.

Claire was the first A-rated scientist in the Faculty of Humanities. She had a strong international profile, served on the editorial board of a number of international journals, was a member of several international speech pathology organisations, and regularly delivered international invited keynote addresses. Claire published over 100 papers in local and international peer-reviewed scientific journals, 25 chapters and 4 books.

Claire was instrumental in the development of the field of health communication in South Africa. The merging of her lines of research afforded a rich and mutually beneficial interface with societal impact and recognition. Her work consistently demonstrated the major contribution that South African research findings and methods and insights have to offer the global forum.

Claire was a recipient of a number of awards, including the Order of Mapungubwe (Silver) in 2007, for her ‘excellent contribution to the field of speech and language pathology, especially in the area of linguistics, sign language, child language, aphasia and head injury and producing ground-breaking research in understanding the complexities of human communication’. She was the winner of the Science & Technology category of the Shoprite/Checkers SABC2 Woman of the Year award in 2008 and the Department of Science and Technology Distinguished Woman Scientist award (academic excellence in Social Sciences or Humanities) in 2010.

Claire had a brilliant and curious mind; she had tremendous vision and a gift for seeing the big picture. She was ahead of her time in many ways - teaching contextually relevant ways of doing therapy and research right from the start of her career. Claire set high academic standards for herself and others. She built strong academic ties both locally and internationally. She broke through glass ceilings and fought for the place of women in academia. She was a fierce defender of ethical principles and patients’ rights, especially those patients marginalised by communication disorders and language barriers. She taught her students to be advocates and activists.
Claire was never more at home than when sitting in a clinic somewhere in a rural setting, doing ethnography under a tree and interviewing patients, genuinely interested in improving their quality of life and care.

Claire will be remembered as an outstanding teacher, supervisor, researcher and mentor. She had great vision for the profession and she has inspired generations of speech therapists and audiologists. Many of those who were taught and mentored by Claire have gone on to become research and clinical leaders, both locally and internationally.
HCRU STAFF 2018

Professor Emeritus Claire Penn (Speech Pathology and Audiology)
Associate Professor Jennifer Watermeyer (Speech Pathology and Audiology)
Ms Johanna Beukes
Ms Daphney Mogopudi
Ms Rhona Nattrass
Ms Megan Scott
Ms Zamokuhle Thwala (Research Assistant)
HCRU
VISION AND MISSION
The Health Communication Research Unit (HCRU), based in the School of Human and Community Development at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) is a multidisciplinary research group concerned with the unique challenges of multilingual and intercultural communication in the South African healthcare context. The main goal of the Unit is to apply methods from the social sciences to investigate communication practices across healthcare domains and sites, with a view to influencing theory, formulating recommendations for policy and practice, as well as developing and implementing site-specific communication training programmes. The Unit is driven by an implementation research paradigm. Given the country’s disease burden and the evidence of our research, there is now an excellent opportunity to put such research findings into practice.

**OUR VISION**

To improve healthcare outcomes through communication.

**OUR MISSION**

To develop innovative ways of understanding communication barriers in the health sector.

**OUR APPROACH**

We use disease-specific evidence-based applied research to address social, cultural and linguistic complexities of health.

**OUR CORE VALUES**

Innovative and excellent research which facilitates:

- Equitable and quality healthcare
- Team focus and collaboration
- Relationship centred care
- Global and local links
- Productivity and postgraduate degrees
HIGHLIGHTS

Claire Penn and Jennifer Watermeyer received awards for Most Cited Researchers in the Faculty of Humanities.

Jennifer Watermeyer was appointed Deputy Chair of the University HREC (Non-Medical).

Johanna Beukes was awarded her MA (Research Psych) degree through Unisa and passed the HPCSA Psychology Board exam. She obtained a SAHUDA-NIHSS scholarship for her PhD study and submitted her proposal to Faculty.

Zamokuhle Thwala was awarded her MA (Research Psych).

Samantha Nolle was awarded her MA (Research Psychology) and graduated in July.

The Unit was invited to host the 2022 COMET (International Communication, Medicine and Ethics Conference) in South Africa.

Jennifer Watermeyer was invited to present a paper and a data analysis session in November at a symposium entitled Medical Interaction across Boundaries. Jennifer presented, via Skype, to colleagues at the University of Jyväskylä and elsewhere across the world (including Nigeria, Rwanda, Europe, and the United States). The recent network upgrades at Wits enabled a successful ‘remote’ presentation with only a few technical glitches. Skype provides a promising option for future connections with colleagues on the continent and abroad.

Harriet Etheredge (an HCRU alumnus and collaborator) was a team member and co-author on a paper published in AIDS detailing groundbreaking liver transplant research.
MAIN RESEARCH THRUSTS AND CURRENT PROJECTS

We continued work in several major areas of interest during 2018:

TB PROJECT: TRAINING FOR LANGUAGE COMFORT

Our collaboration with the Aurum Institute and the MRC ACT4TB/HIV network continues.

Based on the success of work completed last year, the HCRU developed a communication training programme that we believe will be useful in other TB/HIV study settings and sites. We were invited to implement this programme at the Aurum Tembisa site, which we will do pending funding availability from Aurum.

Samantha Nolle completed her Master’s research report on an aspect of the ‘Training for Language Comfort’ pilot project. Her study aimed to investigate enroller’s accounts of the communication process and interaction between then and potential participants, as well as to identify barriers and facilitators to communication. The study used inductive thematic analysis of reflective diaries and interviews on the ICP. Main findings include language and literacy challenges, procedural barriers, communication strategies, lifeworld versus medical world integration, as well as contextual challenges and the role of the enroller. Samantha has submitted her thesis for examination.

Christina Kourie, a SANTHE (Sub-Saharan African Network For TB/HIV Research Excellence) Masters Research Fellow, is conducting a study on the lived experiences of patients with chronic comorbid Human Immunodeficiency Virus and Tuberculosis in South Africa. Christina Kourie and Jennifer Watermeyer attended the SANTHE Research Day in Durban during June.

Jennifer Watermeyer attended the ACT4TB/HIV annual meeting in Johannesburg during November.

One publication based on the work on informed consent in clinical trials has been accepted for publication in an ISI accredited journal. Another publication is under review.
DIABETES PROJECT: BLOOD SUGARS

This recently completed UK Wellcome Trust International Engagement grant-funded project aimed to understand how communities, healthcare professionals and patients can work more effectively to combat diabetes in an urban South African Context. This project was a collaboration between the HCRU, Drama for Life (DfL) and Chris Hani Baragwanath Academic Hospital’s (CHBAH) Diabetes/Endocrine Clinic in Soweto, Johannesburg.

A final project report and evaluation report were submitted to the Wellcome Trust.

Encouragingly, this collaboration continues through an internship provided by CHBAH for a drama therapist during 2018, fulfilling one of the goals of the project that had proven difficult to implement.

Although the project has officially come to an end, we continue to focus on producing publications and conference presentations together with Victoria Hume (WISER) and Tshegofatso Seabi (Wits School of Public Health).
EMERGENCY MEDICAL CALLS PROJECT

This project is funded by the National Research Foundation and is a collaboration between the HCRU and the Western Cape Government Emergency Medical Services (EMS) in Cape Town. We continue to collaborate with Dr Peter Hodkinson at the Department of Emergency Medicine at the University of Cape Town. Jennifer Watermeyer was invited to be a visiting scholar at UCT in 2019. Prof. Tom Koole also continues to act as an advisor and collaborator for this project.

Johanni Beukes, a PhD student, is building on the project’s findings with her PhD study on ‘Managing conflict in emergency settings’. She intends to study the interactional characteristics of conflict in emergency calls, as well as the South African-specific sources of conflict in these calls.

Given the scarcity of qualitative expertise in this field in South Africa, we acted as advisors on a number of projects, including:

- Chloe Buma: MSc at UCT (we assisted with data analysis)
- Zina Bam: MSc at UCT (we assisted with questionnaire development)
- Charnelle Stander: MSc at UCT (we assisted with pre-focus group training)

A publication together with Prof. Tom Koole is in progress.
# RESEARCH OUTPUTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACADEMIC BOOKS (1)</th>
<th>1 co-authored monograph</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JOURNAL ARTICLES (10)</td>
<td>3 in print 4 in press 3 under review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRESENTATIONS (14)</td>
<td>2 invited 5 international 7 local</td>
</tr>
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</table>

## ACADEMIC BOOKS


## ACCREDITED JOURNAL ARTICLES – IN PRINT


## ACCREDITED JOURNAL ARTICLES – IN PRESS

ACCREDITED JOURNAL ARTICLES – UNDER REVIEW


JOURNAL REVIEWS

Prof. J. Watermeyer completed reviews for *Social Science and Medicine* and *Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies*

PRESENTATIONS: INVITED


PRESENTATIONS: INTERNATIONAL


PRESENTATIONS: LOCAL


PRESENTATIONS: OTHER

Jennifer Watermeyer was invited to present a lecture at the WDGMC Transplant Journal Club CME Day in June.
OTHER ACTIVITIES

JOURNAL CLUB

The Unit continued to host a monthly Journal Club. These meetings are open to all, and are CPD accredited. The aim is to facilitate multi-disciplinary dialogue about health communication. Four journal clubs were held this year, with an emphasis on topics related to current research thrusts as well as detailed discussion of qualitative methodologies and rigour.

HCRU 2018 Journal Club Presentations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Paper Presented</th>
<th>Presenter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9 May</td>
<td>An exploration of how South African words historically used as racial slurs are currently used and responded to in social media interactions</td>
<td>Sonia Mbowa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 July</td>
<td>On being heard in emergency calls. The development of hostility in a fatal emergency call.</td>
<td>Rhona Nattrass</td>
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<tr>
<td>21 August</td>
<td>The social accountability of doctors: a relationship based framework for understanding emergent community concepts of caring.</td>
<td>Prof. Jennifer Watermeyer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 October</td>
<td>Acceptability and design of video-based research on healthcare communication: Evidence and recommendations</td>
<td>Megan Scott</td>
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Several data analysis sessions were also held during the year.
VISITORS AND ACADEMIC EVENTS

Prof. Tom Koole (Department of Communication Studies, University of Groningen, and Visiting Professor to the University of the Witwatersrand), was hosted by the Unit in August 2018. Prof. Koole specialises in communication studies and linguistics with a particular interest in conversation analysis, classroom interactions, emergency calls, and health communication. During his visit, Prof. Koole provided opportunities for postgraduate student engagement and participated in a data analysis session on the HCRU emergency call data.

Postgraduate Students

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<tr>
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<th>Completed</th>
<th>Ongoing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PhD</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honours</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

COMPLETED HONOURS PROJECTS

Sandrika Gajraj (4th year BA (Sp & H Th): Photovoice: The Lived Experiences of Speech Pathology and Audiology Students in the Wits Community

Katlego Mogapi (4th year BA (Sp & H Th): The Healthcare Experiences of African Immigrants Caring for a Child with a Disability, attending a Private Practice in Johannesburg

COMPLETED MASTERS PROJECTS

Samantha Nolle: Enrollers’ Perceptions of Communication during Informed Consent at a South African Tuberculosis Research Site.
Zamokuhle Thwala: Investigating the lived experiences of young men (18-35 years), living with type 1 diabetes, attending an urban diabetes clinic.

**ONGOING MASTERS PROJECTS**

Christina Kourie: *Lived experiences of patients with chronic comorbid Human Immunodeficiency Virus and Tuberculosis in South Africa.*

**ONGOING PHD PROJECTS**


*Zamo Thwala at her Masters graduation in December.*
FUNDING

FUNDING RECEIVED IN 2018

NRF CPRR funding – Claire Penn (will roll over into 2019)
NRF Incentive funding – Jennifer Watermeyer
URC Incentive funding – Jennifer Watermeyer
SAHUDA-NIHSS scholarship - Johanna Beukes (PhD funding)
NRF-DST CoE in Human Development – Megan Scott (PhD funding)

FUNDING APPLICATIONS (DECISION PENDING)

NRF Intern Programme for 2019
EU funding – collaboration with Prof. Caroline Jagoe, Trinity College, Dublin, for a project on communication after brain injury
Wellcome Trust fellowship in transplant – Dr Harriet Etheredge (Jennifer Watermeyer is listed as an advisor)

UNSUCCESSFUL APPLICATIONS

Wellcome Trust Collaborative Grant with Dept of Psychology at University of Ghana
NRF-Nuffic funding, with Groningen University
COLLABORATION

NEW

Together with colleagues at Duke University, the University of Amsterdam, Jyväskylä University and the University of KwaZulu-Natal, we are in the process of initiating a Global Health Communication Forum. The primary goal of the forum at present is to establish a network of African researchers working in the field of health communication.

We are now part of the new ARUA Centre of Excellence on Non-Communicable Disease which was awarded jointly to Wits University and the University of Ghana. Ours is the only psycho-social element of this project. As this initiative gains momentum, we hope it will offer new opportunities for building connections with researchers in the field across the continent.

ONGOING

• Aurum Institute
• Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital (Dept of Medicine)
• Drama for Life/University of the Witwatersrand (Dramatic Art)
• ER24
• MRC Centre of Excellence ACT4TB/HIV collaboration
• SANTHE Africa (Sub-Saharan African Network for TB/HIV Research Excellence)
• Trinity College, Dublin (Department of Clinical Speech & Language Studies)
• University of Cape Town (Emergency Medicine)
• University of Groningen, Netherlands (Communication and Information Science)
• Western Cape Provincial Health Department
• WISER (Wits)
• Wits Donald Gordon Medical Centre
CHALLENGES AND CONSTRAINTS

Securing funding for large projects continues to pose a challenge, especially in light of the NRF’s cuts in funding for rated researchers. It may be more effective to pursue a strategy of securing funding for postgraduate student projects which will enable their research costs to be covered. Ultimately, limited funding will necessitate a focus on increasing research incentive funding.

In addition, the rising costs of local and international conference attendance have become extremely prohibitive. Alternate approaches such as via Skype and webinars may provide more cost-effective opportunities for conference participation and international networking. Although we were asked to host the upcoming international COMET conference, a significant amount of seed funding would be required to run such a conference and this funding is simply not available.

Due in part to a lack of funding available for postgraduate students, it has proven difficult to attract and sustain a postgraduate cohort which aligns with transformation agendas. An alternative model of securing funding specifically for local postgraduate students may prove a more successful approach to growing a cohort of students. We receive regular inquiries about postgraduate studies especially from international students, but without funding these students are unable to pursue studies at Wits.

Our funding comes exclusively from active grant seeking and NRF incentive funding. Our students have been active in pursuing channels of alternative funding for their studies and have been largely successful in this regard. The Unit provides mentorship resources and support for developing young academics, both in the School and in other faculties and disciplines, and has had a significant community impact as reflected in our publications and invitations. In the wake of Claire’s passing and as we look forward to carrying the Unit forward, we hope that there will be opportunities for increased support from the School.
2019 PLANS

We have been invited to contribute to a number of special issues and edited books in 2019, including:

• A special issue of Aphasiology (edited by Prof. Jose Centeno) on multicultural and multilingual practice in aphasia.
• An invited chapter for Effective and non-effective practices in mediated and non-mediated health interactions with migrants (edited by Claudio Baraldi and Laura Gavioli, University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, Italy)
• An invited chapter for Multilingual healthcare: a global view on communicative challenges (edited by Christiane Hohenstein, Zurich University/Magdalène Lévy-Tödter, University of Hamburg)

We have been invited to convene a panel at the Communication, Medicine and Ethics conference in Adelaide, Australia in June 2019.

Pending the outcome of the funding application with Prof. Caroline Jagoe at Trinity College Dublin, we hope to begin work on a collaborative project on communication after stroke and brain injury. This project will focus specifically on verbal and non-verbal communication in multilingual and multicultural contexts and the research will be conducted in South Africa through the Unit. Two honours students will be doing research on issues related to stroke, which will advance work in this thrust.

The Global Health Communication Forum is planning a symposium to be held in South Africa next year.

Dr Amisha Kanji (Wits Audiology) and Jennifer Watermeyer have been contacted by the Ida Institute, an international organisation based in Denmark, working to integrate person-centered care in hearing rehabilitation. They are interested in our work on communication in audiology interactions and we look forward to establishing a collaboration in this field.

During 2019, at the suggestion of the School Executive Committee, an advisory board for the Unit is to be established. This board should assist with promoting sustainability of the Unit and succession planning.