

Please use this version. It corrects Dr Price's quote below.



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SA-Swiss Bilateral Research Chair to advance African influence in global environmental health

The University of Cape Town and the Swiss Tropical Institute/University of Basel has launched a historic South African–Swiss (ZA-CH) Bilateral Research Chair, aimed at advancing the voices of African experts in global environmental health research.

This is the first time that another country has been involved in co-founding a research chair under the umbrella of the Department of Science and Technology/National Research Foundation SA Research Chairs Initiative (SARChI). The two joint Chair holders are:

- **Associate Professor Mohamed Aqiel Dalvie** (UCT), an expert researcher in environmental health focusing on pesticides, endocrine disruption and air pollution; and
- **Professor Martin Roosli** (UNIBAS), an environmental epidemiologist and an international expert in exposure assessment, aetiological research and health risk assessments of passive smoking, climate change, noise exposure and ambient air pollution.

The collaboration also paves the way for a partnership between UCT and the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, which will provide a training facility for environmental health practitioners. This will allow for research findings and recommendations to inform the study material used to train environmental health practitioners and to narrow the gap between research and practice.

UCT Vice-Chancellor Dr Max Price said: "This project will enable local academics and researchers not only to collaborate with international researchers but, more importantly, to present to the rest of the world African perspectives on matters of global environmental health. Joint research of this kind will produce knowledge, methodologies and standards that will have relevance for many developing countries. The study will also address the lack of environmental health data from the African continent, which will improve research capacity."

The ZA-CH Bilateral SARChI Chair has two main objectives: to investigate key South African environmental health challenges with global relevance; and to research the relationship between climate change, chemical exposures (including endocrine disrupting pesticides, air and water pollutants) and health effects in the Western Cape.

The Chair's research focus will include:

- The project will investigate the effects of environmental exposure to pesticides on the developmental and respiratory health of rural children in the Western Cape. Research in this area follows previous studies which have shown evidence of adverse health effects on boys and women on farms in the Western Cape where pesticides have previously been detected.
- The project will also investigate the impact of air pollution on asthma in the Western Cape, where the Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning have prioritised some areas as high pollution zones requiring investigation. This follows up on a cross-sectional study conducted in Durban which has provided evidence of adverse health effects on children exposed to air pollution. Tests on the participants will include a physical examination of the reproductive system.
- The health impacts of poor water quality and pollution of soil in an urban informal area, rural area and an industrial area will also be an area of focus. According to the World Health Organisation, water pollution is a major cause for death and disease globally.
- The project will also investigate the relationship between climate change, ecosystems, chemical usage, health and environmental pollution (air, water, soil) in South Africa and their impact on health.

Research carried out in this project will target marginalised populations in informal and rural settlements in South Africa that are vulnerable to the impacts of environmental exposure on their health.

This will be done by increasing research data on local diseases that have international importance and are caused by environmental exposure.

The Chair is co-funded by the Department of Science and Technology and the Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation for the first year, after which it will be funded by the Swiss TPH and the University of Basel. It is managed by the NRF under SARChI.

Collaborators

Research Field	South African	Swiss	USA and Netherlands
Effects of pesticides on child health	Professor Hanna Andrea Rother, Professor Mohamed Jeebhay, Professor Francesca Little, Professor Leslie London, Dr Lubbe Weisner, Mr Hennie van der Westhuizen, Dr Roslyn Baatjies, Dr Steve Delport, Dr Helen Vreede, Dr	Professor Martin Roosli, Dr Danielle Vienneau, Dr Ming Tsai, Professor Martin Wilks, Rd. Rex Fitzgerald, Dr Veit Arit, Professor Brigitte Obrist and Dr Constanze Pfeiffer	Professor Melissa Perry, Professor Mary Lee and Professor Hans Kromhout

	Zelda Holtman, Dr Tanusha Singh and Professor Eugene Cairncross		
Air pollutants and their impact on asthma	Professor Mohamed Jeebhay, Professor Rajen Naidoo, Professor Hanna-Andrea Rother, Professor Francesca Little, Mr Hennie van der Westhuizen, Dr Roslyn Baatjies, Dr Tanusha Singh, Professor Eugene Cairncross	Professor Martin Roosli, Dr Ming Tsai, Dr Kees de Hoogh, Professor Nicole Probst-Hensch, Professor Nino Künzli, Dr Peter Steinmann, Dr Veit Arit, Prof Brigitte Obrist and Dr Constanze Pfeiffer	
The health impacts of poor water quality and pollution of soil in an urban informal area, rural area and an industrial area	Professor Eugene Cairncross, Professor Francesca Little, Professor Hanna-Andrea Rother, Mr Hennie van der Westhuizen and Dr Roslyn Baatjies.	Professor Guéladio Cissé, Dr Daniel Mäusezahl, Dr Peter Steinmann, Dr Mirko Winkler, Professor Martin Rösli, Professor Jürg Utzinger, Dr Soren Becker and Dr Veit Arlt	
The relationship between climate change, ecosystems, chemical usage, health and environmental pollution (air, water, soil) in South Africa	Professor Hanna-Andrea Rother, Professor Jonny Myers, Professor Mohamed Jeebhay, Professor Leslie London, Dr Kalavati Channa, Mr Hennie van der Westhuizen, Dr Roslyn Baatjies, Dr Steve Delport, Dr Helen Vreede, and Professor Eugene Cairncross	Professor Guéladio Cissé, Dr Danielle Vienneau, Professor Martin Rösli, Dr Veit Arlt, Dr Brigitte Obrist and Dr Constanze Pfeiffer	Professor Melissa Perry and Professor Mary Lee

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Issued by: UCT Communication and Marketing Department

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