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## **UCT Faculty of Health Sciences statement on planned protest against vaccination at Groote Schuur Hospital**

The University of Cape Town's (UCT) Faculty of Health Sciences notes with great concern the protest action against vaccination planned outside Groote Schuur Hospital (GSH) on Saturday, 21 August 2021. The Faculty deeply values and supports the right to protest as enshrined in the South African Constitution. The choice of the site for this protest, GSH, creates emotional distress in that it targets a site of hope and care during the pandemic.

This is a disappointing development and reflects a deep disrespect for the work done at GSH. The hospital has been a symbol of all that is best about the country's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It was celebrated as creating a new system of teamwork which created cross disciplinary collaboration. Underpinning these innovative approaches was the process of supporting the staff who work there through a series of initiatives to care for staff members as well as the families of those who came to the hospital seeking care in their vulnerability.

The faculty stands in solidarity with the staff (including cleaners, security, administration staff, drivers etc) of GSH. We stand in support of their work and the herculean efforts they have taken across the era of this pandemic under extremely challenging circumstances and often at personal risk. We salute the work of our partners in delivering the best possible care in responding to the world's greatest human tragedy.

We acknowledge the effective rollout of the vaccination programme by the Western Cape Government. We support this drive and urge all members of the public who are now eligible to take the multiple opportunities to be vaccinated. We are pleased to note that the vaccination programme has been expanded to include young people between 18 and 34 years and we encourage everyone to get vaccinated as soon as possible to prevent the spread of the disease and the debilitating impact on our health system.

The Faculty of Health Sciences places on record that the targeting of GSH represents a serious challenge to an institution and health facility which has become an icon of collaborative management of a complex health challenge.

Issued by the Deanery, UCT Faculty of Health Sciences.

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