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UCT tuberculosis researcher elected Fellow of the Royal Society



Professor Valerie Mizrahi

Photo: Robyn Walker

The University of Cape Town's (UCT) Professor Valerie Mizrahi is among the 80 outstanding researchers, innovators and communicators from around the world who have been elected as the newest Fellows of the Royal Society, the UK's national academy of sciences and the oldest science academy in continuous existence.

They have been selected for their substantial contribution to the advancement of science – from using forensic techniques to identify victims of war crimes, to investigating processes in the Earth's core, and mapping the world's largest peatlands in the Congo basin.

Professor Mizrahi, the director of the Institute of Infectious Disease and Molecular Medicine in the Faculty of Health Sciences, is one of very few scientists from South Africa to have

been elected as Fellows of the Royal Society. The other UCT academics elected as Fellows in previous years are Emeritus Professors George Ellis and William Bond.

Mizrahi said: "I am completely overwhelmed by the honour and am still in a state of disbelief! More than anything, this honour recognises the amazing group of staff, postdocs and students who have worked with me over the past 35 years; they are my inspiration.

"I am also deeply indebted to my brilliant collaborators for their support and encouragement, and for treating me as nothing less than their equal; my many funders, without whom nothing would have been possible; my great host institutions – initially Wits University and the National Health Laboratory Service, and then UCT – for granting me the freedom and opportunity to follow my instincts as a basic scientist, determined to contribute to the mission of tackling tuberculosis through fundamental research; and finally, my very special family for their love, support and understanding."

This year sees 59 Fellows, 19 Foreign Members and two Honorary Fellows elected, reflecting changes introduced in 2023 which increased the maximum number who can be elected. This, according to the Royal Society, will help create a broader and more engaged Fellowship and support the Society's mission of championing excellence in research and science for the benefit of humanity.

Sir Adrian Smith, President of the Royal Society, said: "I am delighted to welcome our newest cohort of Fellows. These individuals have pushed forward the boundaries of their respective fields and had a beneficial influence on the world beyond."

He added that among this year's intake are individuals who were at the forefront of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic response, and those working on global challenges, from TB to climate change. "They are pioneering scientists and innovators from around the world who have confounded expectations and transformed our thinking. This year's intake has already achieved incredible things, and I have no doubt that they will continue to do so. I look forward to meeting them and following their contributions in future."

The Fellows and Foreign Members join the ranks of Stephen Hawking, Isaac Newton, Charles Darwin, Albert Einstein, Lise Meitner, Subrahmanyan Chandrasekhar and Dorothy Hodgkin.

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