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UCT's lecture to discuss Africa's surgical systems

Caesarean sections are the most widely performed surgery in the world. Yet African women are 50 times more likely to die from caesarean section complications than women in high-income countries. This is according to the University of Cape Town's (UCT) academic Professor Salome Maswime.

Professor Maswime is the head of the Global Surgery Division and was recently appointed steering committee chair of the University of the Future project. She is also the founder and president of the South African Clinician Scientists Society and chairperson of the Health Systems Trust Board.

In the next instalment of the UCT Inaugural Lecture series, Professor Maswime will present her lecture titled "From caesarean section related complications to global surgical systems strengthening".

Maswime said that a billion people in Africa do not have access to safe and timely surgery. "This is the focus of global surgery – a relatively new and inspiring interdisciplinary field of enquiry, research, practice and advocacy. This field aims to strengthen surgical systems, improve health outcomes and achieve health equity for all people who need surgical, obstetric and anaesthesia care, with a special emphasis on underserved, marginalised populations and those in crisis," she added.

In recent years, UCT has commemorated academics' appointments to full professorship through the inaugural lecture series. These inaugural lectures are a central part of the university's academic project, and provide a platform for professors who were appointed in the preceding five years to present the body of research that they have been focusing on during their careers. They also serve to provide UCT with an opportunity to showcase its academics and share its research with members of the wider university community and the general public in an accessible way.

Professor Maswime is an obstetrician and gynaecologist. She was the Discovery Foundation MGH research fellow in 2018 at the Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School, and she is a former lecturer at Wits University. She has worked in various hospitals in South Africa, including the Chris Hani Baragwanath Academic Hospital in Soweto, Johannesburg, for approximately 10 years.

Maswime is a renowned global surgery expert because of her research contributions to caesarean sections. She advocates for women's health rights and equity in surgical and maternal care. She is an advisor and consultant to several institutions, including the World Health Organization. She has received numerous awards for her commitment to maternal health and ongoing research in maternal health, including the young achiever and trailblazer award from the President of South Africa in 2017.

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