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UCT academics part of consortium to drive the future of data-driven healthcare solutions

University of Cape Town (UCT) academics are part of the Data Science for Health Discovery and Innovation in Africa (DS-I-Africa) Consortium's third meeting which is underway in Kigali, Rwanda. The significant event promises to foster collaboration and innovation in the field of data science and health across Africa.

This in-person meeting convened on Friday, 3 November and will end on Thursday, 9 November 2023. It is an exceptional gathering of over 250 researchers and stakeholders, both from Africa and around the world, who are eager to exchange ideas, showcase their groundbreaking work, and drive the future of data-driven healthcare solutions.

DS-I Africa – launched in September 2021 through funding from the National Institute of Health (NIH) Common Fund – and 11 other NIH institutes, centres, and offices, have been at the forefront of advancing data science capacity and fostering data-driven healthcare solutions in Africa. The programme started with 19 funded projects and has recently grown to support 38 projects in 21 countries across the continent.

Michelle Skelton, the project lead for the DS-I Africa Coordinating Centre at UCT, expressed her enthusiasm. "The next few days here in Kigali are earmarked for our data science community to reconnect and plan for the future of data-centred healthcare."

The programme highlights included:

- **Datathon (4-5 November):** A two-day event designed to harness the diverse expertise within the consortium. Participants were introduced to the eLwazi Open Data Science Platform and explored compute deployment.
- **Networking Exchange (November 6):** Open to data science-related organisations, this event offered an informal platform for participants to engage with DS-I Africa and its members and to gain insights into their projects. It was akin to a scientific poster session, promoting collaboration and information exchange.

The prestigious event features special guests such as Professor Muganga Didas Kayihura, vice-chancellor of the University of Rwanda; Dr Eugene Mutimura, executive secretary of the

Rwanda National Council for Science and Technology; and Dr Peter Kilmarx, acting director of the NIH's Fogarty International Centre.

The comprehensive programme covers themes addressing critical areas of concern, including sustainable data analysis pipelines, data governance and cross-border data sharing, opportunities to harness artificial intelligence and machine learning for health in Africa, and strategies for effective and equitable partnerships. Additionally, there will be a follow-up discussion with colleagues from the Wellcome Trust.

[Read more about the DS-I Africa consortium and the event.](#)

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