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28 August 2024

UCT's Global Surgery and Emergency Medicine divisions designated as WHO collaborating centre

Centre crucial in supporting move towards universal health coverage



Professor Salome Maswime.

The University of Cape Town's (UCT) head of [Division of Global Surgery](#) Professor Salome Maswime has been selected to lead a newly-designated World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborating Centre, which will be crucial in supporting countries in moving their health systems towards universal health coverage.

The centre's work will prioritise effective organisation, planning, and patient movement across the health system, ensuring timely access to quality care that aligns with users' needs.

WHO has collaborating centres in over 80 member states. These academic sites work with WHO on a wide range of priority areas including nursing, occupational health, communicable diseases, nutrition, mental health, chronic diseases and health technologies.

Maswime has been appointed as the director of the newly-designated WHO Collaborating Centre for Integrated Clinical Care. This prestigious designation underscores UCT's commitment to advancing global health through research, advocacy, and evidence-based practice, particularly in resource-limited settings.

Reflecting on this significant achievement, Maswime shared: "Being designated as a WHO Collaborating Centre is a powerful recognition of the work we have been doing at UCT and the potential it has to impact the future of healthcare globally. Personally, this is the culmination of over 10 years of collaboration with the WHO, and I'm excited about the opportunities this formal partnership brings. It's a new beginning for us to influence global health positively, especially in Africa."

The WHO Collaborating Centre at UCT will support the organisation's mission to strengthen timely access to people-centred primary, emergency, critical, and operative care, with a particular focus on improving healthcare in resource-limited settings. With Maswime as director – closely supported by the centre's deputy director, Associate Professor Willem Stassen from the Division of Emergency Medicine – the centre will engage in cutting-edge research and evidence generation to support the implementation of high-quality, integrated clinical care globally.

The centre is truly multi-disciplinary, engaging a wide range of experts from across the departments of Surgery; Family Community and Emergency Care; and Anaesthesia and Perioperative Medicine. This approach highlights the collaborative effort between the departments at UCT, and their shared focus on improving equitable access to healthcare services, particularly for vulnerable populations.

Maswime notes: "Our work has always been about improving access to care, especially for those who need it most. The divisions represented in the collaborating centre are deeply committed to understanding how healthcare systems can be enhanced across the world, and I believe our alignment with WHO's objectives made us a strong candidate for this designation."

She said the WHO's decision to collaborate with UCT was influenced by the divisions' commitment to advancing healthcare equity, particularly in Africa. The teams involved are known for their work in improving access to healthcare for vulnerable populations, collaborating with international institutions, non-governmental organisations, and governments. Their work aligns closely with the objectives of the WHO's Clinical Services and Systems Unit, which focuses on optimising health service delivery across the continuum of care.

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