



## MeCRU Research Unit officially launched as the Paediatric COVID-19 VACCINE Trial Site



**M**ecru Clinical Research Unit (MeCRU), at SMU has been officially launched as the research site for Phase III Paediatric COVID-19 Vaccine study conducted by the Numolux Group and Sinovac on 10 September 2021. The very first child and the second one had the honour to receive their jabs which kick started the study.

In a hybrid ceremony of face to face and virtual sessions, messages of support and congratulations came as far as China and from a representative of the department of health on behalf of Dr Joe Phaahla, the Minister of Health. Prof Peter Mbatlana, the Vice-Chancellor also congratulated MeCRU for being identified as a site and wished everyone success in this noble campaign to stem the tide of the pandemic amongst young people.

The study is a multi-centre, randomized, double-blind, Placebo-controlled Phase III Clinical Trial to Evaluate the Efficacy, Immunogenicity and Safety of SINO-VAC Inactivated COVID-19 Vaccine (CoronaVac®) in children and adolescents aged 6 months to 17 years.

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The primary objective of the study is to evaluate the efficacy of two doses of CoronaVac® against confirmed symptomatic COVID-19 cases in children and adolescents aged 6 months to 17 years. Efficacy will also be evaluated against hospitalization and severe COVID-19 cases.

The worldwide study will enrol 14 000 children and adolescents in various paediatric age group cohorts across 5 countries (South Africa, Chile, Philippines, Malaysia and Kenya). MeCRU is one of the 7 clinical research sites across South Africa which will enrol 2000 participants from 6 months to 17 years.

Prof Maphoshane Nchabeleng, the Head of the Department of Microbiological Pathology, established MeCRU Research Unit, as a non-profit making research unit sustained by external funders for the clinical trial services.

The study timelines are 8-10 weeks from first participant enrolled. It's timelines for enrolment are up to mid- November to December 2021. The follow ups will continue until 12 months after the second vaccination. The study is expected to be completed by Dec 2022. c

The visits and milestones of the study are as follows: Visit 0 - screening visit with the parent/legal guardian. Visit 1- Enrolment/Vaccination visit: This is the first vaccination, and can be done up to 28 days from screening. Visit 2 - Follow up visit, done 7 days after vaccination. Visit 3 - Second vaccination, done 28 days after first vaccination. Visit 4 - follow up visit, done 7 days after second vaccination. Visit 5 - follow up visit after, 28 days after visit 3. Visit 6 - follow up visit, done 6 months after visit 3. Visit 7 - follow up visit, done 12 months after visit 3.

Follow up visits are conducted either on site or off site (contact by phone). Active follow up is when a participants comes on site to be seen. Participants are given contact numbers for site and study staff to contact them anytime if they experience problems. Participants are also contacted by study staff at least once a week to check on them for the first 2 months: thereafter they are contacted every 2 weeks. They are also encouraged to contact the site on the contact numbers given to them.

The contact numbers are 2 different landlines at the clinic, and 2 cell phones for the Principal Investigator (PI) and the Study Coordinator, which they can call anytime. Some Participants

have an option to have bloods drawn from them, which is 3ml at 4 different visits. They will be in a specific cohort, and they can choose to opt out.

Those participants who are on the cohort will be seen on site for blood draws. If they are not on a cohort, they can be contacted telephonically. Continuous monitoring of activities starts as soon as there are 10 participants and it becomes ongoing throughout the clinical trial. Any deviations from the protocol gets reported to the South African Health Products Regulatory Authority (SAHPRA) and to SMU Research and Ethics Committee (SMUREC). This will be included in the annual reports of the department of Microbiology which also include reports of activities of MeCRU research projects.

The investigator has been in contact the two participants with them and their parents.

They were contacted on the day they received their first jabs (10 September 2021) and they reported to be well with no local or systemic symptoms. They were contacted again on the weekend of (11 September 2021), still no symptoms. Their parents were also reminded to contact the site should there be any issues.

The two participants will report to MeCRU on 20 September 2021. They also have the contact numbers for calls, send an SMS or even WhatsApp should they experience any symptoms before their visit on site.

Vaccine pessimists spread lies about vaccines and undermine the COVID 19 vaccine campaigns, leading to the current slow uptake. It may even be worse for children. "To MeCRU Research Unit, the provision of basic information and education on the vaccines is very critical. We believe that when people are well informed, they are able to make informed decisions based on the information given. The community is being given ongoing education through Vaccine Discussion Groups (VDG) which can be done on site or in the communities," said Prof Nchabeleng.

The Community Advisory Group (CAG), Community Liaison Officer and the Community Educators, Recruitment and Retention Officers engage with the community and they address/clear the myths and beliefs about the clinical trials in general.



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# SMU launches Golden Key International Honour Society



The SMU Chapter of the Golden Key International Honour Society (GKIHS) was launched recently at the Fire and Ice Hotel. GKIHS, the world's largest collegiate honour society for undergraduate and postgraduate students has a linkage with over 400 universities. The GKIHS is built on pillars of academic excellence, leadership, service and nurturing student leadership at campuses.

SMU's GKIHS Chapter launch was a hybrid event, in which Prof Eunice Seekoe, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Teaching, Learning and Community Engagement delivered an opening address which was attended by a captive audience of SMU Chapter members and those who joined the proceedings virtually.

“Congratulations to members for the successful launch. SMU GKIHS chapter is committed to honour excellence in the universe through academic achievements, grooming of young efficient leaders and to provide good community services, said Prof Seekoe.

“The chapter is a brain child of Mr Thulani Ramasehla. He approached me, in 2019, to discuss the feasibility of bringing this wonderful programme into existence, in the SMU community. We then took the initiative to contact Golden Key South Africa to enquire about the programme and what was required of us to be part of this wonderful society. The relationship was then established between my office and the

one of Golden Key South Africa,” explained Prof Seekoe. “As GKIHS, we seek to become a benchmark of excellence for students in academia and in leadership for SMU Students. There is a need to remind the students to celebrate each achievement”, said Mr Thulane Ramashehla in his remarks, as the President of SMU GKIHS.

Ms Natasha Maharaj, representing Golden Key South Africa, outlined the membership benefits. She said that as a member, one is due to receive academic recognition at an international level and access to financial rewards in the form of scholarships, grants and awards.

Mr Obriel Maphosa, the President of University of the North West University Golden Key, congratulated SMU Chapter for the launch. He added that membership benefits do not only accrue to individual members, but the university the individuals are enrolled with, will also reap benefits through grants and exchange programmes.

The membership of the SMU GKIHS Chapter was selected by schools and to qualify to be a member, one needs to be within the performing cohort of 15% in the class who obtain 65 percent pass mark in the final result. This membership makes them eligible for very attractive rewards, scholarships, travel, and overseas study opportunities in the final results. 627 students have qualified, in this way.



## The executive committee of SMU GKIHS Chapter is as follows:

- Mr Thulani Ramasehla:** *President*
- Mr Tshiamo Sechogo:** *Vice-President*
- Mr Jabulani Nkosi:** *Secretary*
- Ms Kamogelo Mokhari:** *Community Outreach*
- Ms Courtney Cooper:** *Membership Recruitment Officer*
- Ms Tebogo Mojapelo:** *Public Relations Officer*
- Mr Thendo Tshingowe:** *Treasurer*

**Left to right:**  
Ms A Malope, Ms C Cooper, Ms K Mokhari, Prof A Ramukumba, Prf E Seekoe, Ms T Tshingowe, Ms T Mojapelo, Mr J Nkosi and Dr T Tsebe

**Squatting:**  
Mr T Ramasehla and Mr T Sechogo



# Celebrating Research Excellence



The plenary speaker, Dr Sechene Stanley Gololo, presented on the “Potential role of medicinal plants in the alleviation of Covid-19 complications.” Dr Gololo is a Senior Lecturer at SMU, School of Science and Technology. He is a researcher in Biochemistry with a PhD degree in Phytomedicine. Dr Gololo has been working on medicinal plants for the last 10 years and has vast experience in this field.

Prof Linda-Gail Bekker, presented “The safety and efficacy of COVID 19 vaccine clinical trials” Gail-Bekker is the Director of the Desmond Tutu HIV Centre at the Institute of Infectious Disease and Molecular Medicine, University of Cape Town and Chief Research Officer of the Desmond Tutu Health Foundation.

Prof Neil H Wood's title was Dentistry during COVID 19. Prof Wood qualified as a dentist from the University of Pretoria where he also completed his post-graduate diploma in Maxillofacial and Oral Pathology. He then specialized in Oral Medicine and Periodontics (MDent, OMP). He completed his PhD jointly between the University of Antwerp in Belgium, and SMU. He authored and co-authored more than 70 national and international peer-reviewed papers.

Dr Anton Lentoer's title was “In times of coronavirus disease: Emotional, Behavioural and Psychological impact of Covid-19- What we know and Where to from here? Dr Lentoer is a clinical psychologist, a senior lecturer, and researcher in the Department of Clinical Psychology in the School of Medicine at Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU). Dr. Lentoer's main research track seeks to understand key neuro-, behavioural- and cognitive pathways in certain communicable and non-communicable diseases.

Professor Tivani Mashamba-Thompson's topic of her key note address was “Evidence Synthesis and its relevance for global and South Africa's response to COVID-19”. She was appointed as a Deputy Dean of Research and Postgraduate Studies with effect from 1 January 2021. She is an NRF-rated Medical Scientist (Molecular Biology) registered by the Health Profession Council South Africa. Tivani completed her Master of Medical Science in Pharmaceutical Sciences with Suma Cum

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The 2021 Research Days showcased the best in research that the university had to offer. Seasoned and upcoming researchers delivered their oral presentations and posters. During this hybrid event, some presenters chose to do face to face presentations, on a podium in the Skills Simulation Centre, whilst others presented their papers online.

A panel of judges sat for the presentations, took notes, probed the presenters at the end of each presentation. Some of the presentations ignited robust debates and exchanges from the judges and presenters.

A total of 127 oral presentations were presented. A large majority of the presentations covered health topics. There were also those that focused on natural and veterinary sciences. Prof Lekan Ayo-Yusuf, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research and Postgraduate Studies and Innovation, focused on the topic “Use Advancing Research and Innovation at SMU during COVID-19: The Silver Linings.

Laude at University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) before registering for a PhD in Public Health, which she completed in two years in the same institution. Made presentations on.

Ms Varsetile Nkwinika, presented on the topic “Human Papillomavirus Infections and the Impact of Viral load in women attending the Gynaecology Clinic at the Dr George Mukhari Academic Hospital, South Africa.

‘Whilst Ms K L Manjinja's topic was “Implementation of

Perinatal Problem Identification Programme in a Hospital at the Bojanala District, North West Province”.

All these presentations, oral or virtual and the posters that presentations were made on, constitute a very huge body of knowledge that the SMU researchers contributed to the Health, Natural and Veterinary Sciences, in the country.



# Focus on SMU spoke to the Director of Information Communication Technology (ITC)

## 1. The space outside the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) office is rapidly filling up with delivery of ICT stock. This is but one step towards the many milestones of the network and infrastructure renewal project. Please outline the scope of the project?

The network and infrastructure estate project has four distinct components, namely the:

- cabling infrastructure
- data centre infrastructure and services
- network equipment and infrastructure
- compute or server, storage and backup solution

The cabling infrastructure component concerns the pulling of fibre optic underground cable between buildings on campus; and will carry the backbone and network traffic of SMU. Furthermore, all Ethernet or copper cables on campus will be replaced. Ethernet provides network and user's computer points in offices for both phones and computers, as well as connection point for wireless or WiFi access points and services.

The network equipment component will entail installation of all the network switches hardware to which the fibre optic and

ethernet infrastructure will connect to provide access and network services for every connected device on campus.’

The data centre component addresses the storage-space and hard drives, and where servers and storage are assembled together. And it would also be the location where the University core switch, routers and network services would be controlled from. As part of this project component, it leads to a situation where the current server room is relocated to the new ICT offices at the old “animal production”. The data centre has very specific requirements it needs to meet in terms of temperature and other environmental controls and compliance requirements. Such as installation of fire rated ceilings and doors, uninterruptible power and having a dedicated electricity generator.

Whereas, the compute/server component will entail all the server based hardware required to run the University's aligned to our Microsoft A5 licensed suite, which controls security measures, provides productivity tools and enables ICT to manage the ICT assets of the University. It will also include all ICT core services required to provide comprehensive connectivity and access for ICT enabled devices to both in-house and online ICT services.

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**2. We heard that the ICT infrastructure at SMU is so outdated and old that there is not even enough back up capacity, which poses a serious risk to SMU data and information. If this is true, how will this project root out this problem?**

There is a measure of truth to the statement above, although it is not completely accurate. The current SMU network was installed in 2007 after the merger of Medunsa with the University of Limpopo. When the Universities demerged, most of the ICT server based assets belonged to UL and as such were removed from SMU's premises. The ICT team at SMU performed virtual miracles to keep systems up and specifically to allow the University to register students in 2015. Currently the network is roughly thirteen years old and is kept alive through the dedication of the ICT team.

The SMU Enterprise resource Planning (ERP) or Integrated Tertiary System: Integrator 4.1 is a hosted system and sits offsite within a server warehouse. The system is backed up regularly and the server farm complies to all requirements required by law as well as by ICT's policies. The SMU email is also a hosted system, though it resides at a different location than the ERP system.

Currently the biggest risk to information that belongs to SMU is the information that staff members have saved on their laptops or computers. As part of our Microsoft A5 license, SMU has access to OneDrive, which is a cloud-hosted service where each member of staff has 1TB of storage space available. Staff members should be backing up their files to OneDrive on a regular basis. ICT will soon commence an awareness campaign that addresses how staff members may use OneDrive.

**3. Please quantify the network and infrastructure capacity that the project will bring to SMU ICT needs?**

Primarily the network estate infrastructure project may be likened to a "heart transplant". The current network is at a point of failure where even the most dedicated support and maintenance from the ICT Department would not be able to sustain it indefinitely. To this end, ICT needs a new "heart" to replace the one that has done its job and done it well, but it needs to be replaced for the patient to keep on living.

Furthermore, when speaking to capacity, the upgrade will enable the University to use the full complement of Microsoft A5 applications. This includes functions such as portal services, telephony services, automatic provisioning of software, enhanced security and a host of other features that are too many to mention. Think of the impact that Microsoft Teams has had on our organisation, MS Teams is part of the Microsoft suite and in my opinion, and it's not even the best part.

The last part to register on this point is wireless access. The network refresh aims to provide pervasive wireless or WiFi access across campus, in every room, office, and every lecture hall.

**4. What is the human capital resource that will be needed to staff the ICT system that will be in place once the project is completed?**

The current ICT organogram will be sufficient to capacitate the function in the short term, but the ICT's organisational structure should be reviewed, as services and expectations grow, we might want to revisit this question in the nearest future.

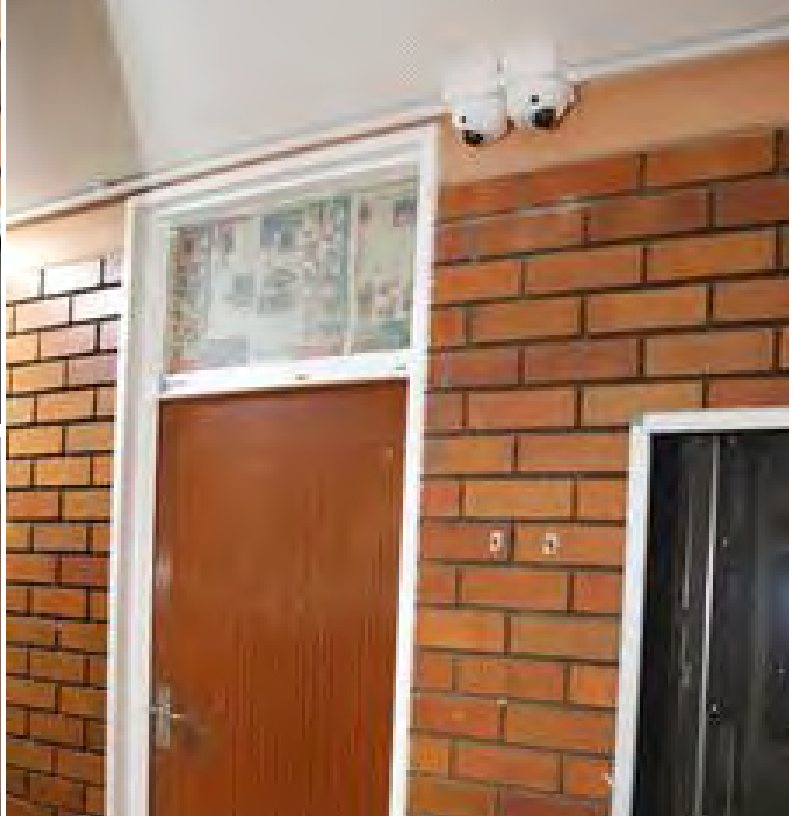
**5. Please outline the timelines and milestones of this project?**

Narratively speaking, without providing the full plan, the project in four parts has a variety of milestones. The first of which was completing the standardisation of network equipment and servers, completed. The next milestone was to follow a two-staged bidding, which it is completed.

For proper facilitation, SMU had appointed standing Bid Evaluation and Adjudication Committees to support the defined Supply Chain Management processes.

A further milestone was the appointment of Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) partners and installation partners. This would be followed by delivery of equipment on campus and the initiation of installation and off course the completion of installation and project review. Currently the timeline for project delivery or at least delivery of the bulk of the project is December 2021, with the tying off loose ends scheduled for January and February of 2022.





# Installation of Security CCTV cameras in Student Residences

The Department of Security Services has installed video surveillance cameras at Student Residential Areas to enhance the safety and security of students, employees, and property. The key objective of these CCTV cameras is to improve safety and security while discouraging the occurrence of behaviour that violates laws or policies. Evidence gathering and identification of offenders through the cameras will become handy in the post-incident investigations of crimes.

The CCTV cameras will be used as per university policy and other applicable legislations'. Permanent signage alerting students, employees, and visitors that cameras are in use is posted in each building. The installation will not reduce security officer's deployment or supervision for each residence. Cameras are only installed in the corridors/public places, and not placed in areas where there is an expectation of privacy, such as bathrooms or student rooms.

The cost and feasibility of having a security officer deployed at each and corner of the residence 24/7 are impossible. However, having eyes 24/7 at key areas and having a few dedicated security officers monitoring them, is much more

beneficial and more cost-effective. By viewing the hallways, it will be possible to proactively prevent a possible threat like a person wanting to cause harm to another or identify an unauthorized person in an area or trying to gain access to a specific room. Since the installation of the CCTV cameras in some of the residences such as 4B, 5A and 5B, especially where the cameras were installed at the corridors; public spaces the incident and other petty crimes that were previously reported to Security Services have significantly been reduced.

This project is a long time coming, about 3 years already and is nearing the end where it will be handed over to the end user, the security department. Residences involved in this project are 1A, 1B, 1D and 5B of which Residence 1B was the first and is on the brink of completion. Residences 1C and 2B have been put on hold as these are to be renovated, the upgrading of the will go hand in hand with the renovation. Residences 4B and 5A is already done a couple of years ago and if these are to be seen as pilot projects, it can only be said that technology used cut down maintenance as well, lessen the risk factor and since the cameras were installed, not one failure was reported due to electronic malfunction.



Nthabiseng Semono



Rearatwa Mamogale

# SMU Students join Blue Bulls Ladies Team

SMU Students Nthabiseng Semono and Rearatwa Mamogale recently joined the Blue Bulls Rugby Union u/20 girls YTC team. The pair, which is currently studying Physiotherapy and Dietetics respectively, also represent SMU women rugby team. *Focus on SMU reporter* spoke to the duo to get an understanding of their accomplishment.

## Tell us about yourself

**Nthabiseng Semono (NS):** I am a passionate person, a strong team worker and understand in order to achieve difficult tasks. I have to work with other people, work very well under pressure and not easily shaken.

**CC:** I am someone who usually prefers working on their own; rather an introverted person who has a creative mind. I believe I am a good leader, hard-worker, patient, a conscientious being and quite observant.

## How do you balance your studies and rugby?

**NS:** I am not always free and my course is overwhelming, but because I am motivated, passionate and take rugby serious, I make time for it. Especially when I have upcoming tests or exams always make sure I plan my time for both of them.

**RM:** With my luck, I have enough time for both rugby and academics; at least during the day, I dedicate myself to anything school related, but studies tend to be stressful, so rugby became my stress-reliever even though rugby practice is approximately 2 hours per session, I know that after the session I will be more focused and calmer.

## What motivated you to play rugby? In addition, which position do you play in?

**NS:** I am not always free and my course is overwhelming, but because I am motivated, passionate and take rugby serious, I make time for it. Especially when I have upcoming tests or exams always make sure I plan my time for both of them.

**RM:** Well, nothing really motivated me to play rugby. I never even intended on playing any sports however a coach once told me I

looked like someone who had good arms for rugby, but I was in disbelief because my arms were weak but despite my weak arms and unfit physique, I just took a chance and started attending practice and I'm falling in love with rugby. Well, I am currently placed in the blind-side flanker (Number 6) however my current goal is to play in one of the Backline positions specifically the Outside centre (Number 13).

## What are your goals for Blue Bulls Rugby Union u/20 girls YTC team?

**NS:** Growing and becoming a good and a big team. Playing with big teams.

**RM:** Being a first-timer rugby player, I honestly never thought I would get here however, my goal for the Blue Bulls Rugby Union u/20 team would be to perform to our greatest ability, becoming a better player than I was the first time I held a ball and having fun while playing. If I dedicate myself and improve my skills, maybe Blue Bulls Senior team is my next goal.

## What decisions did you think you made that were effective during your trials?

**NS:** Applying skills that I was taught during practice and teamwork.

**RM:** Enforcing the basics skills that were taught during practice, but the first time was difficult because I am in a team with people who have played before so sometimes, I really would not know what to do but I try to enforce whatever skill or tactic is required, in the moment.

## How will you develop your performance moving forward?

**NS:** Not missing practice.

**RM:** We need more players here at school to improve my skills, some programs I cannot really do due to the lack of players but practising more, playing more games, and including fitness in my day-to-day life would really help me develop as an individual.

# Evaluating the Performance of Routine Health Information System for Reproductive Health in Tshwane District



SMU Nursing Sciences Lecturer **Dr Sophy Moloko** had recently completed her PhD research on Evaluating Performance of Routine Health Information System for Reproductive Health in Tshwane District. Focus on SMU Reporter spoke to **Dr Moloko** to get insight on her research.

[What is innovative about your PhD research \(Evaluating Performance of Routine Health Information System for Reproductive Health in Tshwane District\)?](#)

The research evaluated the performance of the Routine Health Information System (RHIS) for Reproductive Health in the Tshwane District. The evaluation identified the success and the challenges with the system by applying a mixed-method study design. This culminated in strategies being developed to improve the performance of the RHIS in managing reproductive health information using a Delphi design.

The strategies focused on building capacity in data management; ensuring sufficient resource capacity for data management; enhancing support for generating quality data; simplifying the couple year protection rate (CYPR) indicator; improving the culture of information use; improving the performance of the CYPR indicator, and establishing measures to evaluate the performance of the RHIS in managing routine reproductive health data.

**What do you think are your most significant research accomplishments?**

The study's significant accomplishment is identifying the reciprocal relationship between the three determinants of data management processes. The performance of routine information system management (PRISM) framework, which was applied consistently throughout the study, highlighted the significance of behavioural, technical and organisational factors in evaluating the system's performance. The findings confirmed

that the determinants directly influence the data management processes, which affect the performance of the RHIS in managing routine reproductive health data. The study revealed a lack of competence for data collection and processing among health care providers (HCPs), a lack of interest and a high workload, which were recognised as the critical behavioural factors associated with poor data quality. The research demonstrated the interplay between behavioural, technical and organisational factors. There was also an observed influence of organisational factors on behavioural issues in relation to insufficient training, lack of resources, inadequate supervision, lack of recognition and incentives.

There was a clear relationship between operational factors and the performance of the RHIS in managing routine reproductive health information. Data accuracy was related to the distinctive identified behavioural factors, such as a lack of HCPs' interest and commitment to data management, affecting HCPs' competency in RHIS tasks. Data accuracy was also exacerbated by the complex design of the data collection tool. This signalled a need for authorities to design simple but effective tools.

The research involved most stakeholders, including the data collectors, the facility managers, and the experts in data management and reproductive health programme. The stakeholders agreed upon the strategies.

[What has been the impact of your research?](#)

The study contributed to research in two critical areas, namely routine health information systems and reproductive health programme studies. Although the impact of the research in improving the performance of routine health information system cannot be observed immediately, it is envisaged that once the strategies are implemented at the primary health care facilities, community health centres, mobile clinics, district hospitals and

the District health office, Gauteng Province and other provinces with a similar context, there might be a positive change in data management and reproductive health programme.

### What are your professional goals in the next five to ten years?

My professional goals are to be promoted to the senior lecturer position, become an NRF rated researcher, and a professor.

### **Describe in non-technical language why your research project is interesting**

I got interested in the project due to my passion for reproductive health service. Before I was employed at the university, I worked in primary health care facilities in Tshwane as a PHC nurse and a trainer. One of the very busy services was the family planning service. However, when it comes to performance reports, the service was always not performing as expected. We were not meeting the target as set by the district health. At that time, I did not know what the challenge was. Hence, I decided to evaluate how the HCPs and managers used the system to manage the reproductive health data.

What was interesting about the research project was the realisation that the challenge with the programme's performance was the lack of understanding of the data management of reproductive health data, mainly the collection of the family planning data. This challenge appeared to be caused by the lack of training. As highlighted earlier, it was also interesting to note that the staff shortage contributed to poor data management. Finally, it also pointed out that the managers did not understand how the performance of family planning programme was calculated because they were not involved in setting and evaluating the set targets.

### How do you balance your time for research, lecturing and family commitments?

Finding the balance is not easy, but I tried to allocate time to each aspect. The preparation of lectures mainly was done at the office during working time, same as conducting classes. However, it was not always possible due to other work commitments like meetings; then, you prepare for the lessons at home. Same as the supervision of the undergraduate and postgraduate research students.

The most challenging one was the balance between family commitment and research. As a mother and wife, it was challenging, however possible. I started by employing a full-time helper responsible for the home chores, excluding the cooking. Therefore, I will share the cooking days between my two teenage daughters and me. The 13-year-old will cook once a week, the 16-year-old three times and me three times a week. The practice allowed me to assist the kids with school works and other activities. When I was under pressure and could not even cook, I will ask my husband to cook. He was also actively involved, especially with the school works for the children. Weekends were dedicated to the research. I was not visiting any friends or family members unless there are a funeral or

important events. Working from home at weekends was also challenging because the children needed their attention too, especially the young one who is eight years old; I, therefore, had to come to the office on weekends to work.

### **Describe a research problem you have faced. What did you learn?**

The problems that I have encountered were securing appointments for individual interviews with the managers and returning questionnaires from the expert during the Delphi study. The managers will tell you how busy they are and do not have time for interviews. You would have a secured appointment at the time, but on arrival, you find the manager busy. You then have to wait for hours before you can start the interview. The challenge with the return of questionnaires from the expert was the non-compliance to the due date. You will send a reminder after reminders.

I have learned that the researchers should start seeking permission from the gatekeepers immediately after obtaining the ethics clearance and secure appointments directly when all approvals are obtained. The writing of the chapter will take place concurrently with the data collection process.

### Describe your teaching experience. How do you feel about teaching? What is your teaching philosophy?

My teaching experience has been tremendous but challenging at the same time. I have learned that the teaching and learning process is greatly influenced by the physical and psychosocial wellbeing of both the teacher and the learner. The latter is more significant with adult learners because of their life experiences. Hence, I make an effort to know the learners as individuals so I can support where necessary or refer them to the appropriate support.

I believe that teaching and learning in higher education are not only about dishing out information or content to learners and assessing them later. An interactive process involves the active participation of both the lecturer and the learners. It should foster critical thinking and problem solving. I believe that learners do not come to class empty-headed but have existing knowledge acquired from experiences. The existing knowledge should be used as pegs to hang the new knowledge; I try to link the new knowledge to what is known. This improves the learners' ability to reflect on their learning experiences. I expect learners to be self-directed, curious and creative; hence, I engage them throughout the learning process by giving meaningful individual and group activities in the form of assignments, role-plays and case studies. The activities allow them to apply what they have learned to real-life situations. I believe that the assessments should holistically assess the mastery of content, application and creativity.

### **Do you have any experience in curriculum development?**

Yes. I was actively involved in developing the curriculum for the current undergraduate nursing degree, the Bachelor of Nursing,

midwifery, and the postgraduate diploma in community nursing, which is still awaiting accreditation by the South African Nursing Council (SANC) and the Council for Higher Education (CHE).

### ['What advice would you give to a new researcher about supervising undergraduate or masters students?'](#)

The researcher and the student need to establish expectations and clear goals for the project. There needs to be a supervisory contract that the student and the supervisor sign. The contract should explain the roles of the supervisor and that of the student. There should be regular contact between the two parties with constructive feedback. Always keep a record of all meetings to protect yourself. As a supervisor, one needs to be available as much as possible while maintaining a meaningful and respectful relationship between you and the student.

At times, the supervision process can be very frustrating and stressful, especially if there are misunderstandings or a lack of commitment from the student. Therefore, the supervisor needs to control and manage his or her own emotions and those of others. One needs to understand that students are human beings and undergo life challenges. Therefore, the supervisor should be able to show compassion, kindness, empathy and understanding. Finally, the supervisor should strive to inspire and motivate the students.

### **How would you go about motivating a researcher who is going through challenges?**

The first step is to identify the type of challenges the researcher is facing. In case of psycho-social challenges, the supervisor should remind the researcher about the initial goals for the project, being personal and professional. The researcher will be encouraged to discuss the challenges with the supervisor or seek counselling services to discuss problems. In case of academic challenges, the students will be advised to seek educational and learning support from the supervisors and the institution to develop the competencies needed to undertake the research.

If the challenge is related to a lack of commitment and focus, the researcher will be advised to devote an appropriate amount of time to the research tasks. The researcher will be aware that learning is hard and challenging; if it is easy, it is not learning. The researcher needs to note that research comes first; therefore, one needs to work day and night. Holiday and fun will come after the hard work is done and goals are met.



# SMU Celebrates World Physiotherapy Day

**W**orld Physiotherapy Day (PT) marks the unity and solidarity of the global physiotherapy community. It is an opportunity to recognise the work that physiotherapists do for their patients and community. SMU Alumni newsletter reporter had a one on one chat with Physiotherapy Lecturer and event coordinator **Ms Ntombenkosi Sobantu** to get insight on the purpose of the Day.

## What is the main objective of the World Physiotherapy Day (PT)?

**Ntombenkosi Sobantu:** The World Physiotherapy Day is an opportunity to recognize the work that physiotherapists do for their patients and community. It is to create awareness about the role of Physiotherapy in keeping people fit and healthy. This day emphasizes advancing and promoting the profession and its expertise.

## Why is 8 September designated as World PT Day?

**Ntombenkosi Sobantu:** The 8<sup>th</sup> September of 1996, was designated as the first World PT Day. It was designated to pledge solidarity to the global physiotherapy profession.

## The focus for this year's World PT Day is rehabilitation and Long COVID and the role of physiotherapists in the treatment

and management of people affected by Long COVID. Kindly elaborate on what is the long COVID and the role of Physiotherapists in the treatment and management of people affected by Long COVID.ys

**Ntombenkosi Sobantu:** People who are infected with COVID end up with residual challenges and problems because of the signs and symptoms that linger for a while even though one might be out of the infectious stage. Physiotherapists encourage positioning (proning) which allows good perfusion in the lungs and exercises, which promote both mobility and strength of the joints and muscles respectively. Pacing of activities of daily living are also encouraged. Breathing exercises also play a big role in the rehabilitation of long COVID patients.

## What inspired to choose the 2021 activities that you had when celebrating World PT Day at SMU?

**Ntombenkosi Sobantu:** In 2021 at SMU, we had to change the way we normally do things since the COVID-19 wave is still with us and we did not want to add into the increasing number of infections. Relay was our main activity; this allows a few individuals to participate at a time. In addition, we did not have any sticks to pass around. The cue was that once your group member has entered your circle, therefore it is time for the next person to move. The second activity was aerobics, which



allows spacing in-between the participants. The first year students aligned with massage techniques to allow fun learning; for easy recall one of the aerobic classes during their practical classes. There were also plenty of fun ball games that were played by the students. Music was the order of the day to uplift the participants' spirits. Physiotherapy students danced their way out until the end of the event. The Physiotherapy day celebration was the 2<sup>nd</sup> years' brainchild and I was working closely with student Surtie Muhammad.

### What impact do the World PT Day activities have on the profession's profile and standing with both the public and policy makers?

**Ntombenkosi Sobantu:** Physiotherapists are known to be movement specialists; therefore, it is important that we always show our involvement in exercises in the communities that we are working in. Physiotherapists also need to be in the forefront when it comes to prescribing exercises to ensure that no injuries are incurred and participants benefit fully. Reports from around the world indicate that World PT Day activities have a positive impact on the profession's profile and standing with both the public and policy makers.

### On behalf of the SMU Physiotherapy students, what message would you like to share with our readers?

**Ntombenkosi Sobantu:** The aim is to try as often as possible to get the SMU community to move; especially at this time of Covid-19 restrictions. Most of the work; including classes rendered by lecturers to the students; are done online. Everybody is sitting still in his or her offices, homes or rooms. As physiotherapy students, we believe that movement is health.



**LET US MOVE SMU.  
MOVEMENT FOR HEALTH.**



## Having Fun While practising Emotional Intelligence with SMU Administrative Officers

*"Thank you for the fun we had, as we learnt"* commented one of the participants, at the two-day Emotional Intelligence (EI) training workshop which was led by Ms Odette Ramsingh, the Executive Director, Human Resources Department (HRD) and four of her colleagues.

Following the Culture Survey, that's was conducted earlier this year, the HRD identified the need for emotional intelligence (EI) training across all levels in the organisation. EI refers to the capacity to recognise one's own feelings and those of others; for motivating ourselves, and managing emotions well in ourselves and in other relationships.

An external facilitator was sourced to lead the initial training across the University. 80 employees were trained. However, given the importance of this training and the need to filter throughout the organisation, HR took a decision to host a 'train the trainer' course to develop internal capacity which will be cost effective but will not compromise on the quality of the training. Careful consideration was given to the matter and the persons selected were Ms Odette Ramsingh, Mr M Lerata (Manager: OD); Ms H Matlakala (SDF); Ms B Mbanjwa (HRBP) and Dr E Venter (CUTL). The trainers underwent an intensive training course to certify their skills as EI trainers, and were able to test this on the Administrative Officers Cohort in a two-day session at Bundu Inn.

**By all accounts, the trainers equipped themselves very well as some of the evaluations from the participants said:**

- *The workshop was very informative and helpful.*
- *It was very interesting and EI will be practiced to enhance the workplace.*
- *EI workshop to be introduced per department in order to bring change of attitudes.*
- *SMU HR is the best.*

One can well ask, why EI and why does SMU employees need it? Emotional intelligence underlies our self-awareness, empathy, leadership and resilience. In a world where the number of people we work with on a daily basis has multiplied, and has become more complex, the ability to understand and harness human emotions is critical to success. Leading with EI shows how to harness one's own emotions and those of others to enhance decision-making, improve behaviour and facilitate high performance.

Employees will become aware of how your emotions directly impact those around you, both in work and personal lives. EI is a key ingredient in successful leadership and can be developed through practice. The SMU we want to see is one in which leaders and employees are emotionally intelligent.

Kicking off the training with the twenty-four Administrative Officers was a great way to start as in many ways this cohort is at the centre of the running of the University as they interact with the different levels to ensure operational efficiency. The trainees left the training not only happy but with the following

competencies and the promise to be the change that they want to see in SMU:

- Self-awareness
- Emotions of other employees
- Not raising their voice instead make argument and engage others
- Resilient leadership principles
- Supporting each other
- Commitment to their job
- Stop relying on others
- Think before they act
- Familiarising themselves with the policies
- Expansive leader and
- Strive to do better all the time.

Other members of the Administrative Officer's cohort will also soon get the opportunity to attend the emotional intelligence training, as well as other employees. For now, watch out for an invite, and do come and have fun as we all become more emotionally intelligent, and contribute to



# Upcoming

# EVENTS



## THE ANNUAL FUND VIRTUAL LAUNCH



### 17 SEPT 2021



#### OBJECTIVE:

The objective of the fund is to mobilize resources for the University in support of its noble vision of transforming health services through excellence and innovation. This vision is inhibited by lack of social welfare for our students. SMU calls upon you to partner with us in our plight to raise philanthropic money to meet SMU students' immediate social needs.



# EVENTS

## University Assembly

Event theme: "Roadmap to Culture change"



20 SEPT 2021

🕒 10:00 - 13:00 | 📍 Sports Complex and Virtual

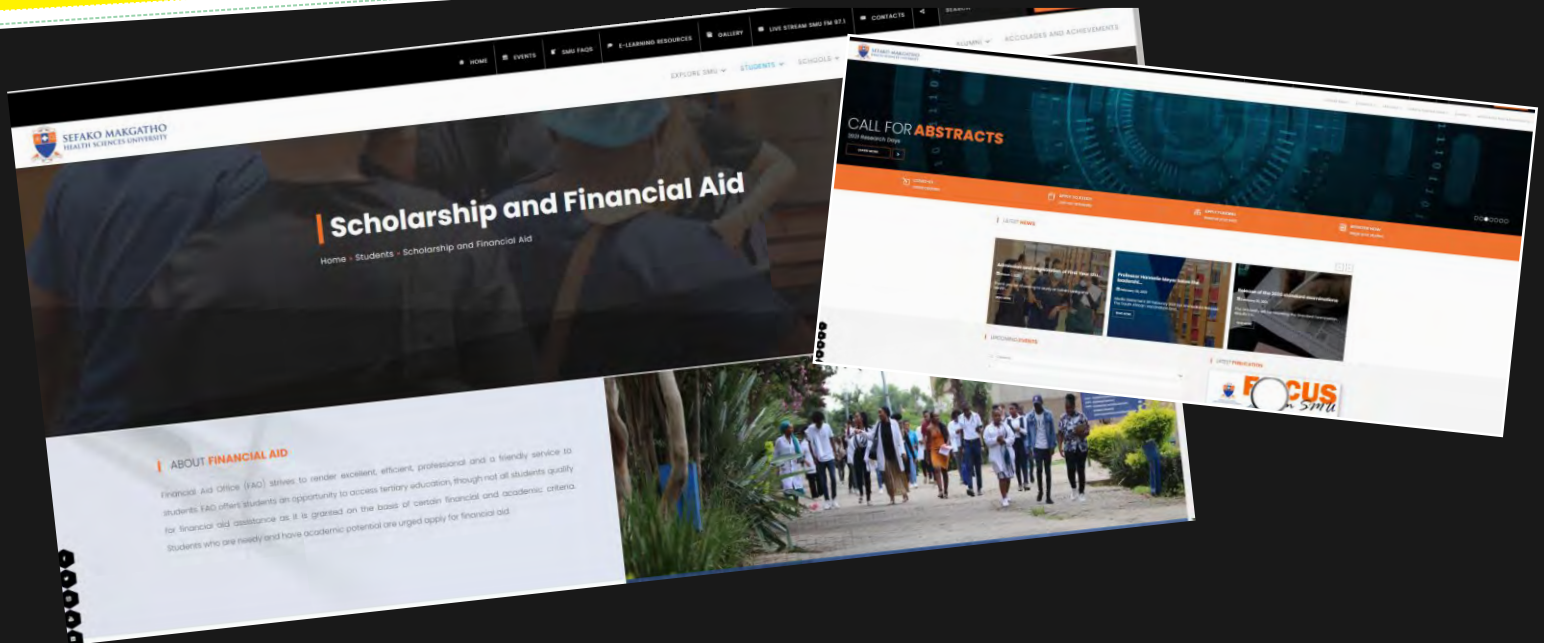
**RSVP link:**

<https://forms.gle/3XNkWgSuMsdCoyi3A>

**For more information contact:**

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## New SMU Website Launch

It's a date  
**27 Sept 2021**

*Log in and experience a whole new SMU world.*