

# Building South Africa's knowledge economy through research capacity development



Cape Town | As we mark the start of Youth Month and as the country ramps up measures to tackle the spread of COVID-19, the collective brainpower of the medical health research community, especially young scientists, is required – and the South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC) is rising to the challenge.

Through its [Division of Research Capacity Development](#) (RCD), the SAMRC continues to support the long-term sustainability of health research in South Africa. Through RCDs support programmes and platforms, the SAMRC contributes to developing a generation of young scientists to help respond to the disease burden and pandemics such as COVID-19. The COVID-19 pandemic has reminded the entire world of the high social value of medical and public health research, and the importance of investing in capacity development to provide better solutions to various health problems.

Over the years, the RCD has provided a platform for many emerging researchers in different areas of health research and institutions across the country to develop their research skills and showcase their talent. In just the last five years, the Division has supported over 300 PhD candidates (including a few MScs) – 60% African black, 12% Coloured and 10% Indian which is a significant contribution to research transformation. In overall, 73% of the beneficiaries are female – this is in line with the SAMRC's commitment to the advancement of women scientists in order to bring a gender-edge to science and research.

According to the RCD Division Manager, Dr Thabi Maitin, a considerable number of the beneficiaries who opted to conduct research in the area of HIV and TB and other infectious diseases, are Millennials. “Although it's regrettable that COVID-19 has to date claimed more than 300 000 lives across the globe, we are hoping it will inspire the Generation C to pursue research in medical and health sciences, the same way HIV and TB did with the Millennials,” said Maitin.

In 2020 alone, the SAMRC, through its Division of RCD, is investing about R40 million to ensure that young scientists who wish to undertake their PhD studies, receive support through

scholarships to do so. New beneficiaries will soon be joining an exciting and vibrant 2020 family of more than 60 young scientists who are already enjoying prestigious support from the RCD towards completion of their PhDs.

During this 2020 Youth Month, the SAMRC will be celebrating some of its amazing young and emerging science leaders poised to make a difference by improving the health of South Africans through science. We will be sharing their journeys and current research projects on different SAMRC platforms, including social media, with the aim to inspire the youth to enter the field of science. The campaign will also demonstrate the impact of supporting and investing in young scientists.

SAMRC President and CEO, Prof Glenda Gray, reiterated the message of building our human capital in health care. “The SAMRC is invested in developing the limited critical mass of medical and health scientists and supporting our next generation across various health professions,” said Gray.

Join us as we celebrate our young scientists on:

Twitter: @MRCza

Facebook: SA Medical Research Council

LinkedIn: South African Medical Research Council

SAMRC News: <https://www.samrc.ac.za/media>

**NOTE TO THE EDITOR:**

The SAMRC is dedicated to improving the health of the people in South Africa, through research, innovation, development and technology transfer. The scope of research includes laboratory investigations, clinical research, and public health studies.

Its Division of Research Capacity Development (RCD) supports the growth of health research capacity by offering scholarships and grants to South African citizens who are pursuing their research careers in medical and health sciences. For more information on the various SAMRC funding programmes, go to: <https://www.mrc.ac.za/research-capacity-development>

**Release date:**

Thursday, June 4, 2020 - 15:28