



WITS HEALTH  
CONSORTIUM

# ANNUAL REVIEW 2022



## List of branches

### HEAD OFFICE

31 Princess of Wales Terrace, Parktown,  
Johannesburg, 2193

GPS : -26.1779738, 28.0464528



+27 11 274-9200



info@witshealth.co.za

➔ 272 Bronkhorst Street South Block, Brookfield Office Park,  
Nieuw Muckleneuk, Pretoria, 0075

➔ New Nurses Home, Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital,  
26 Chris Hani Road, Diepkloof, Soweto, 1860

➔ St Andrews Office Park, 39 Wordsworth Ave,  
Bedfordview, Gauteng, 2007

➔ Wakefield Court, 145 Prince Street, Durban, 4001



www.witshealth.co.za

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" Cultivating collective brilliance through collaboration, the Wits Health Consortium fuels innovation, fosters resilience, and propels healthcare excellence forward, inspiring transformative change for a healthier tomorrow."

# INTRODUCTION

“Inspiring Collaboration and Engagement aims to build confidence in researchers and encourage them to take advantage of the collaborative opportunities that exist around them.”



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2022, the Wits Health Consortium (Pty) Ltd (WHC) supported over 100 research divisions and employed 5,664 people managing over 300 new sponsorships, contracts and grants contributing to our annual grant income of R3.2billion.

Through our focus on collaboration, continuous improvement, we developed new approaches to optimize resource utilization and to maximize value. We committed ourselves to adopting a customer-centric approach aimed at delivering exceptional services to our clients, and to further establishing ourselves as a trusted partner. Over 110 audits were conducted on Grant awards to ensure transparency and optimal management of donor funding, grants and corporate sponsorships.

- Total value of new grants  
**R 1 107 320 700**
- Total value of new sponsored clinical trials  
**R 304 883 387**



## ABOUT OUR COMPANY

The Wits Health Consortium (Pty) Limited (WHC) is a wholly owned company of the University of the Witwatersrand under its Faculty of Health Sciences. WHC was established as a result of an initiative proposed by the Faculty of Health Sciences, to unlock commercial opportunities that would provide additional sources of revenue for the Faculty and its Departments. Council approved the Faculty's proposal in October 1997 and the Company was registered in 1998.

WHC operates a Shared Services Centre (SSC) to support our various research entities or divisions that operate within WHC. Academically, these divisions fall under their relevant university department but they are viewed as independent divisions of the WHC and managed according to structures, project plans and budgets set out by the division directors. We provide key services to our research entities in five areas:

- Legal Framework and Research Support
- Governance
- Financial and Grants Management
- Human Resource Management
- Payroll Management

All academic endeavors are directed, managed, and controlled through the University structures. WHC research active staff are jointly appointed with the University and are responsible for conducting research, managing donor-funded activities, clinical trials, and pursuing entrepreneurial innovation in health-related activities.



# LEADERSHIP

## PROFESSOR SHABIR MADHI Non Executive Director and Chairman

Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of the Witwatersrand  
MBBCh (Wits), MMed (Wits), FCPaedS(SA), Ph.D



### DEAN'S STATEMENT

The University's centenary in 2022 was a significant year for the Faculty of Health Sciences, highlighting our long-standing legacy in scholarship, education, and research. Our unwavering commitment to unraveling complex health issues has led to significant global and local impact.

The financial strength of our Faculty is evident in the acquisition of over R3.2 billion in research grants. These grants have played a pivotal role in advancing significant studies, particularly in the fields of genetic diversity, oncology, infectious diseases, and Covid-19 research. This substantial funding has also allowed us to address the growing impact of environmental factors on human health in the African context.

Looking ahead, we remain committed to advancing health sciences, fostering a culture of innovation, and ensuring that our research efforts have a lasting and meaningful global impact.

**“Collaboration and partnerships have been crucial to our success. Our combined efforts have fostered a culture of knowledge transfer, demonstrating our dedication to innovation, quality research and global impact”.**



## MR ALFRED FARRELL

Executive Director

Chief Executive Officer of Wits Health Consortium (WHC)

B Comm, B Compt (Honours), CA (SA)



### CEO'S STATEMENT

I am incredibly proud of the dedication and determination demonstrated by our skilled WHC teams in providing professional, excellent, and efficient administrative and financial management for our divisions. I am grateful for the support we have received from our Board, which has greatly benefitted the Consortium and its shareholders. Additionally, I would like to express my admiration for our divisions, who consistently achieve growth in various areas.

The impressive performance we continue to deliver is a direct result of our collective efforts and our commitment to ensuring that our divisions and stakeholders receive the support and service they deserve. Our ambition is to foster a high-performance environment by remaining true to our purpose and values. We are aligned to our Faculty of Health Sciences' commitment to fostering collaboration and through a culture that values transparency, inclusivity, and collective problem-solving, we're cultivating an environment where collaboration thrives, enabling us to deliver exceptional results.

**"Transparency, adherence to international standards and procedures, and our affiliation with prominent research academics and international donors, have upheld our reputation as a trusted organization."**



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**“Collaboration among our Board of Directors is not just a strategy, it is the key to unlocking innovative solutions, fostering sustainable growth, and driving positive change in our organization and beyond.”**



**PROFESSOR SHABIR MADHI**  
MBA, PhD (Genetics)

Professor Madhi is Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of the Witwatersrand. A National Research Foundation A-rated scientist. Professor of Vaccinology in the School of Pathology at the University of the Witwatersrand and Director of the world-renowned Medical Research Council Vaccines and Infectious Diseases Analytics Research Unit (Wits VIDa). National Research Foundation/ Department of Science and Innovation SARCHI Chair in Vaccine Preventable Diseases. Co-Director of African Leadership in Vaccinology Expertise (ALIVE).

As a trained paediatrician, Prof Madhi's research has focused on the epidemiology and clinical development of vaccines against pneumonia and diarrhoeal disease. These studies have informed World Health Organization Recommendations on the use of the lifesaving pneumococcal conjugate vaccine and rotavirus vaccine in children, and influenza vaccination of pregnant women.



**MR ALFRED FARRELL**  
B Comm, B Compt (Honours), CA (SA)

Mr Farrell is a skilled financial and accounting manager with many years of experience in senior financial management positions at companies such as the Automobile Association of South Africa, Interleisure and the Premier Group. Prior to joining WHC in 2002, Alf held the position of Chief Financial Officer for BDFM Publishers (Pty) Ltd.

Mr Farrell has steered Wits Health Consortium (WHC) with invaluable insights gained through his successful career. Since joining Wits Health Consortium Mr Farrell has directed its portfolio of development and research programmes, managed through the Shared Service Centre, and has ensured the growth of WHC has been combined with high standards of delivery.



### MR DESMOND ARNOLD

CA (SA), FCMA, AMP (Wharton)

A highly-skilled accountant and has held numerous financial positions in some of South Africa's leading corporates. He is a past President of the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (SAICA) and was awarded honorary life membership in recognition of his services to the accounting profession.

Mr Arnold is Chairman of the WHC Audit Committee and is also a member of the WHC Risk Committee. He is also a Trustee of the Absa Pension Fund.



### PROF. DAYNIA BALLOT

MB BCh, FCPaeds SA, PhD

Professor Ballot is a renowned pediatrician with a subspecialty in neonatology and an NRF C2 rated researcher and Head of the School of Clinical Medicine at the University of Witwatersrand.



### DR RACHEL CHIKWAMBA

MBA, PhD (Genetics)

Dr Chikwamba is responsible for strategic alliances and communication and is an expert in scientific and industrial research. Her research has focused on metabolic engineering for nutrition and pharmaceutical applications.

Chikwamba has studied in the US and Australia and was an Honorary Research Fellow at St George's Hospital at the University of London. She has also taught post-graduate classes at the University of Pretoria.



### MR PRAKASH DESAI

B Comm, B Compt (Honours), CA

Mr Desai supports WHC in areas such as risk, audit, strategy and investment. He is currently Chief Executive Officer at Afrifocus Securities and worked as a former Group Chief Executive and Group Finance Director at Avusa. Prior to this, he was a non-executive director at M-Net Supersport Ltd and at Caxton Publishers and Printers Ltd.



### PROF. JOHNNY MAHLANGU

CA (SA), FCMA, AMP (Wharton)

Head of the University of the Witwatersrand's School of Pathology and Head of the Haematology Diagnostic Section in the Department of Molecular Medicine and Haematology.

Peer reviewed many journal publications and international congress presentations. He sits on the editorial boards of various haemophilia treatment guideline committees and participates in multi-national clinical trials.



### MS PHAKAMA MBIKWANA

MBA, PhD (Genetics)

Dr Chikwamba is responsible for strategic alliances and communication and is an expert in scientific and industrial research. Her research has focused on metabolic engineering for nutrition and pharmaceutical applications.

Chikwamba has studied in the US and Australia and was an Honorary Research Fellow at St George's Hospital at the University of London. She has also taught post-graduate classes at the University of Pretoria.



### PROF. LYNN MORRIS

Deputy Vice-Chancellor :  
Research and Innovation

Professor Lynn Morris is the Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Research and Innovation at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa. She obtained her PhD from the University of Oxford in 1988. She is the founding Director of the Antibody Immunity Research Unit based at the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) where she also served as the interim Executive Director.

Over the last 30 years she has made significant contributions to the understanding of the antibody response to HIV infection and vaccination. Lynn is an NRF A-rated scientist, has published over 270 papers holding an H-Index of 66 and has featured in the Web of Science list of highly cited researchers. She is a member of Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf), member of the Council for the National Advisory Council on Innovation (NACi), the African Academy of Sciences (AAS), the Royal Society of South Africa (FRSSA) and The World Academy of Sciences (TWAS).

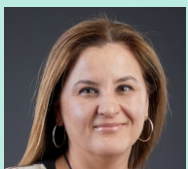




### DR. TSHEPO MOTSEPE

MB BCh; MA (Public Health)

Dr Motsepe is a KwaZulu-Natal and Harvard University graduate. She has worked in private medical practice locally and abroad and has developed specialist knowledge in several fields, including family health, refugee health and HIV. She was Deputy Director of the Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital in Johannesburg and Chairperson of the Health Accreditation Committee for the Gauteng Provincial Government.



### PROF. MARIA PAPANATHANASOPOULOS

Bsc (Hons), Msc, PhD

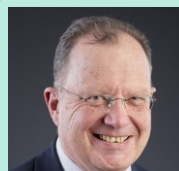
Professor Papathanasopoulos is an established scientist who has built an exceptional reputation in the infectious diseases, bioinformatics, and virology fields. She has established world class laboratories that conduct innovative research on HIV-1 drug discovery, and vaccine designs that are recognised at a national, regional and international level.



### PROF. HELEN REES

OBE, MB BChir, MA, MRCGP, DCH, DRCOG, MBA (Harvard)

Professor Rees is Executive Director of the Wits Reproductive Health and HIV Institute. Her specialist area focuses on HIV and Reproductive Health and she has published extensively in these fields. She has been internationally recognised for her expertise and for her contribution both nationally and internationally to research and medical advances in these areas. She is an Honorary Professor in the Department of Clinical Research at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM).



### PROF. MARTIN VELLER

MB BCh, FCS (SA), M Med (Surg)

Professor Veller is Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of the Witwatersrand and a Professor in the University's Department of Surgery. He is an expert in Vascular Surgery with extensive academic, research and teaching experience. Professor Veller also serves on the Board of Directors of the Wits Donald Gordon Medical Centre. He has trained at the University of Witwatersrand and at St. Mary's hospital at London's Imperial College.



### PROF. ZBLON VILAKAZI

PHD (Physics)

Professor Vilakazi is Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Research and Post-Graduate Affairs at the University of the Witwatersrand. His research interests include computational physics and heavy-ion collisions at high energies and his work saw him nominated as a Young Global Leader by the World Economic Forum in 2010. He is globally recognised for his expert knowledge in physics and nuclear research.



### MS TASNEEM WADVALLA

Legal advisor at University of the Witwatersrand

Ms Tasneem Wadvalla currently serves as the Head of Legal Services and the Chief Staff to Professor Zblon Vilakazi, the current Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of the Witwatersrand. She previously served as the Chief of Staff to Professor Adam Habib and prior to that as a Senior Legal Advisor in the University's Legal Office, bringing her unbroken service to the institution to 14 years. Ms Wadvalla is responsible for managing and overseeing the functions of staff and the activities in the Office of the Vice-Chancellor, including the coordination and management of certain strategic projects. One such project was the 4IRSA collaboration that involved several public, private and higher education sector partners. She represents the Vice-Chancellor's Office and the University in her administrative, legal and other capacities across multiple platforms and engages with the University's governance structures in this capacity, including the University's Council and its sub-committees, the Senate and the Wits Foundation Board of Governors.



**MR ALFRED FARRELL**  
Chief Executive Officer



**DR ITUMELENG FUNANI**  
Chief Academic Officer



**MR SAGIE PILLAY**  
Chief Operating Officer



**MRS CHRISTINE GROBLER**  
Deputy Chief Operating Officer



**MR KARL BASSON**  
Chief Information Officer



**MR DANIEL MOSIA**  
Chief Commercial Officer



**MR JEAN DU RANDT**  
Chief Financial Officer

“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.”

- Helen Keller



# VISION & MISSION...



**Our vision is to be a valued strategic partner of Faculty, recognised for the additional resources, commercial/ business expertise and supplementary income we are able to make available to it.**

**Our mission is to support the teaching, research and public health service mission of Faculty; either through the provision of commercial and administrative support for income-generating activities ancillary to the main objectives of Faculty.**

## VALUES

### **S** STEWARDSHIP

We recognize our role as stewards of the Faculty's assets by managing our resources responsibly, effectively, and efficiently.

### **E** EMPLOYEES

We are committed to the success of our employees, as they are our most valuable resource, and so provide them opportunities for development, growth and personal success.

### **R** RESPECT

We are courteous, conscientious and respectful in our dealings with our customers, employees, Faculty and the communities where we work.

### **V** VARIETY

We embrace different viewpoints and support mutually beneficial partnerships among a diverse mix of individuals, departments, institutions, and community groups.

### **I** INTEGRITY

We conduct ourselves in a fair, ethical and honest manner. We strive to make all decisions in the best interests of our customers, employees, Faculty and the communities where we work. We are accountable and answerable for our actions.

### **C** CUSTOMER SERVICE

We value innovative, timely, efficient, solution-oriented, and cost-effective services and systems. We are committed to achieving the highest levels of customer satisfaction achievable, given the resources at our disposal.

### **E** ENTREPRENEURSHIP

We foster a culture where entrepreneurship and prudent risk taking are encouraged, where the entrepreneur is able to benefit as a partner in their venture.

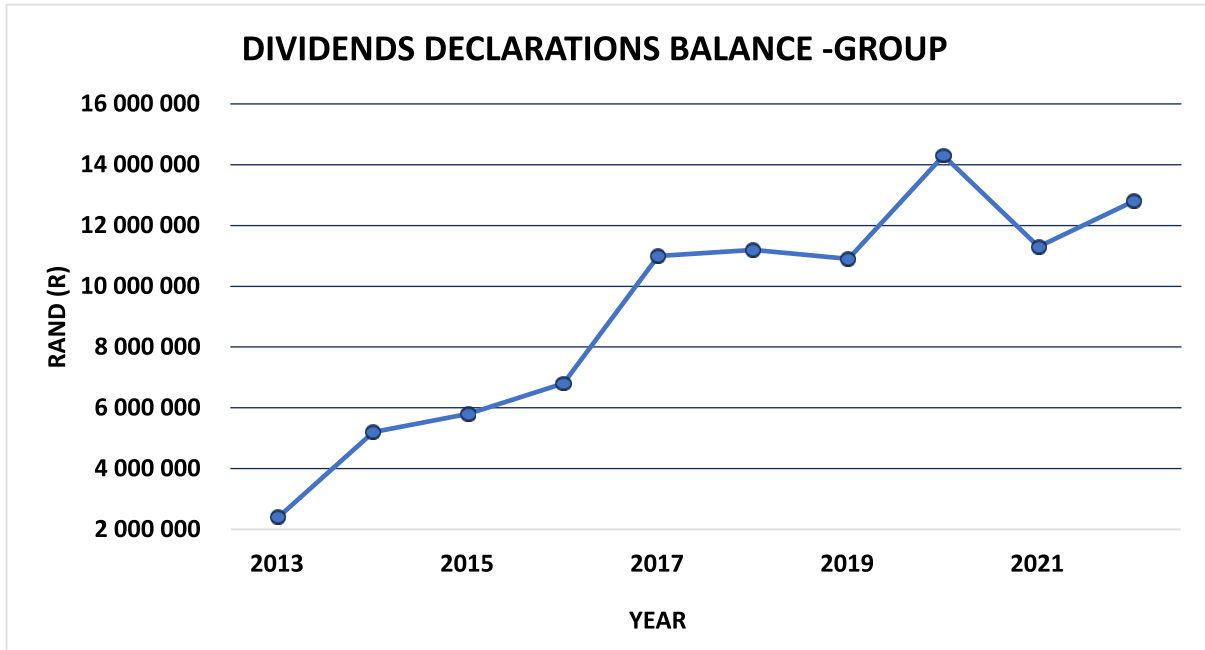
# PERFORMANCE



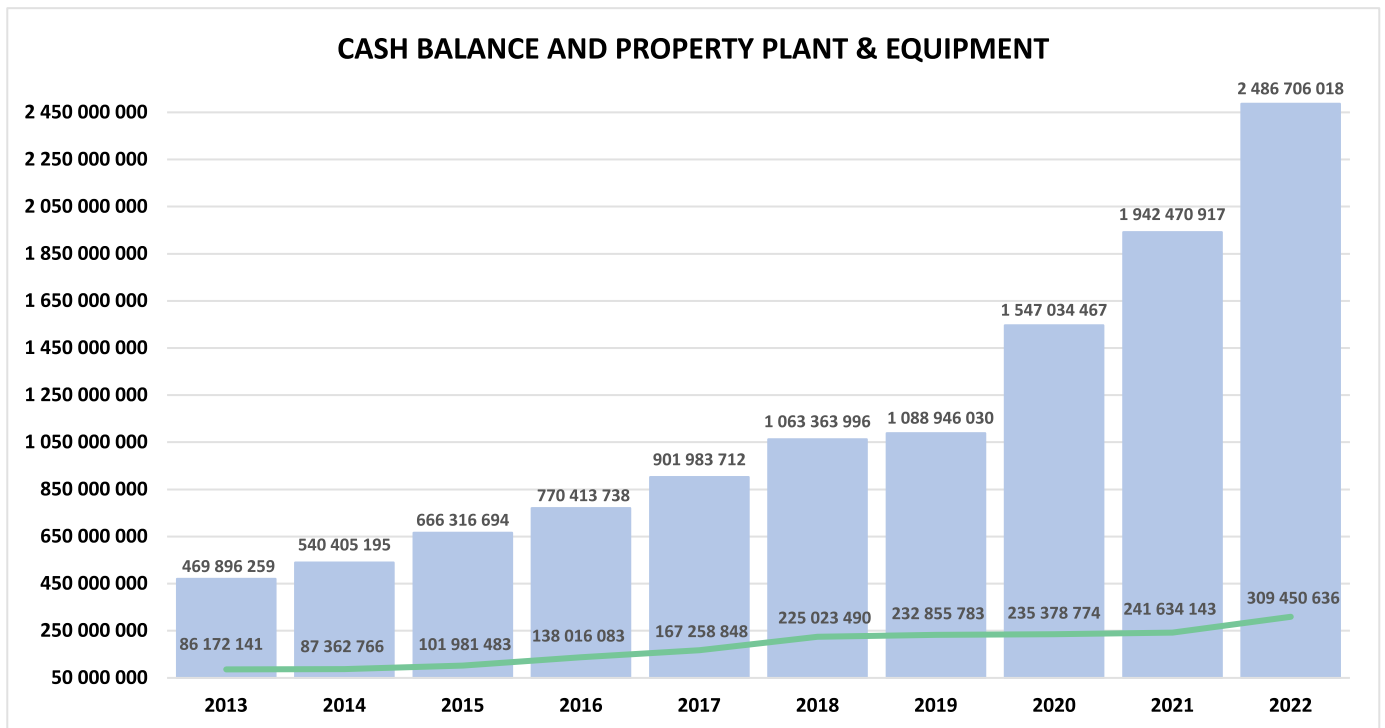
## FINANCIALS

### STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME

INCOME	2022	2021
Sponsored funds received	2 943 366 968	2 591 369 118
Pharmaceutical income	200 309 722	247 649 424
Sale of goods and rendering of services	32 004 298	43 429 286
Other	10 948 740	8 111 579
<b>Gross Income</b>	<b>3 186 629 728</b>	<b>2 890 559 407</b>
Cost of sales	-27 836 703	-10 965 231
<b>Surplus before operating expenses</b>	<b>3 158 793 025</b>	<b>2 879 594 176</b>
<b>Operating expenses</b>	<b>-3 178 938 133</b>	<b>-2 762 658 496</b>
Foreign exchange gains/(losses)	20 629 207	30 156 897
<b>Operating surplus before net finance income</b>	<b>484 099</b>	<b>147 092 577</b>
<b>Net finance income</b>	<b>94 171 785</b>	<b>38 626 947</b>
Finance income	99 506 652	43 241 299
Finance costs	-5 334 867	-4 614 352
<b>Surplus before income tax</b>	<b>94 655 884</b>	<b>185 719 524</b>
Income tax expense	-773 421	-571 903
<b>Surplus for the year</b>	<b>93 882 463</b>	<b>185 147 621</b>
<b>Total comprehensive income for the year</b>	<b>93 882 463</b>	<b>185 147 621</b>



□ Dividends paid R12 800 000 for Year 2022



■ Cash Balances R2 4 86 706 918 for Year 2022

■ Property Plant & Equipment R309 450 636 for Year 2021



# SERVICES



WHC provides world-class administrative support to its divisions through a wide range of Shared Services Centre functions. Our skilled teams have acquired extensive knowledge and experience, enabling WHC to manage complex projects professionally and efficiently.



## Financial Administration

Our Financial team treats each project or division as a stand-alone unit that can be ring-fenced and operated using a dedicated bank account, overseeing commercially-funded projects.



## Grant Management

A strong element of our work lies in comprehensive grant management. A team of experts assist in specialist areas, including the following: Grant Application, Budget Support, Donor Reports and Audits.



## Internal Audits

Robust internal checks and balances are in place to ensure that our business dealings are ethical and well managed from a financial and compliance perspective.



## Contract and Legal Services

The Contracts team works very closely with the Legal Services specialists who review all documentation and check-lists to ensure full compliance prior to projects being submitted for sign-off and approval.



## Human Resource Management

Effective and comprehensive HR management services are a core element of our support. Our role is both functional and strategic. The team offer organisational support.



## Payroll Services

Our payroll solutions can be tailored to suit unique needs and to ensure compliance with plans and budgets. A centralised efficient team works closely with divisions to take care of all their payroll related requirements.



## Research Ethics

Provides valuable support to the University of the Witwatersrand's Wits HREC. In addition to maintaining up-to-date documents, policies, check-lists guidelines, processes clinical trial submissions and more.



## Clinical Trials Service

Established expertise in clinical trials, assisting with regulatory research support, protocol review applications, staffing and trial management. Assists with Clinical Research Support, Clinical Trial Management and Clinical Research Courses.



## Continuing Professional Development

Professionals working in the healthcare environment are required to comply with requirements in terms of earning points for Continuing Professional Development (CPD points).



### THIRD STREAM IT SERVICES AND SOLUTIONS

Best practice in IT systems, software, network connectivity, cloud storage and IT management solutions.



### UKWENZA PRINT STUDIOS

Print media services, graphic design, multi-media productions, presentations, branding and conference packages.



### INTEGRATED HEALTH DELIVERY NETWORK

Self-funding clinical health centres and medical teaching platforms that offer affordable and quality healthcare.



### ACADEMIC ADVANCE TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Specialise in delivering training in the field of clinical research, HR management courses along with soft-skills development and critical skills.



## OUR SUBSIDIARIES

WHC provides world-class administrative support to its divisions through a wide range of Shared Services Centre functions. Our skilled teams have acquired extensive knowledge and experience, enabling WHC to manage complex projects professionally and efficiently.



# WITS HEALTH CONSORTIUM

## • DIVISIONS

01. WITS REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND HIV INSTITUTE (WITS RHI)
02. CLINICAL HIV RESEARCH UNIT (CHRU)
03. HEALTH ECONOMICS RESEARCH OFFICE (HE<sup>2</sup>RO)
04. VACCINES & INFECTIOUS DISEASES ANALYTICS RESEARCH UNIT (WITS VIDA)
05. CLINICAL LABORATORY SERVICES (CLS)
06. PRIORITY COST EFFECTIVE LESSONS FOR SYSTEM STRENGTHENING (PRICELESS SA)
07. HEALTH SYSTEMS ENABLEMENT AND INNOVATION (HSEI)
08. ANDEMIA
09. WITS HEALTH HUBB (WHH)
10. WITS CLINICAL RESEARCH (WCR)
11. EZINTSHA
12. MEDICAL ENTOMOLOGY RESEARCH GROUP (MERG)
13. MRC/WITS AGINCOURT RESEARCH UNIT
14. EMPILWENI SERVICES AND RESEARCH UNIT (ESRU)
15. RENAL RESEARCH GROUP/THE KIDNEY FUND
16. MYCOLOGY DIVISION
17. WITS SPORT AND HEALTH (WISH)
18. WITS MATERNAL, ADOLESCENT AND CHILD HEALTH RESEARCH UNIT (WITS MRU)
19. JHB PULMONOLOGY/ICU
20. WITS/SAMRC ANTIVIRAL GENE THERAPY RESEARCH UNIT (AGTRU)
21. INDLELA





Indlela@HE<sup>2</sup>RO is a collaboration between Wits University's Health Economics and Epidemiology Research Office (HE<sup>2</sup>RO), the University of Pennsylvania's Center for Health Incentives and Behavioral Economics, Boston University, and the University of Cape Town, with funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Indlela@HE<sup>2</sup>RO is a first-of-its-kind unit focused on strengthening the ability of health service delivery providers and key research institutions to develop and test contextually appropriate nudge interventions that are informed by behavioural science principles.

Indlela was established in 2020 with a further four years of follow-on funding to be awarded in 2023. Key highlights of our work include the co-design and implementation of six behavioural insights test projects with HIV implementing partners in South Africa, with findings disseminated through various academic and social media platforms (visit [www.indlela.org](http://www.indlela.org)).

We also released a NUDGE handbook, hosted an inaugural nudgeathon and multiple webinars, including workshops and satellite sessions at international and local conferences, and have established a Behavioural Hub – a cohort of participants that can be drawn from for rapid surveys, prototyping and contextual enquiry.

We look forward to the regional expansion of Indlela@HE<sup>2</sup>RO and continued support of building local and regional capacity in behavioural economics.



Sophie Pascoe  
CO-DIRECTOR



Harsha Thirumurty  
BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCE  
SCIENTIFIC DIRECTOR



Jaqui Miot  
STRATEGIC ADVISOR



Candice M Chetty-Makkan  
CO-DIRECTOR



Lungisile Vezi  
PROGRAMME COORDINATOR



Caroline Govathson  
BE FELLOWSHIP AND  
COUNTRY LEAD FOR



ZIMBABWE  
Simamkele Bokolo  
COMMUNICATIONS LEAD  
AND COUNTRY LEAD FOR



ZAMBIA  
Preeth Mistri  
LOCAL TECHNICAL DESIGN  
LEAD AND COUNTRY LEAD



MALAWI  
Neo Ndlovu  
B-HUB LEAD COUNTRY  
CO-LEAD FOR KENYA



Teniola Egbe  
UPENN PROJECT MANAGER



Lawrence Long  
BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCE  
TECHNICAL EXPERT



Brendan Maughan  
Brown  
BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCE  
TECHNICAL EXPERT



Alison Buttenheim  
BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCE  
TECHNICAL EXPERT



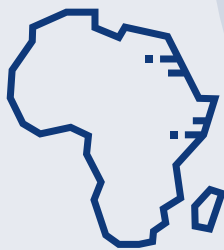
### EVIDENCE

Generate behaviourally informed ideas and evidence to shape policy



### SHARING

Promote rapid and effective sharing of knowledge and evidence through multiple channels



### SOUTH 2 SOUTH

Expand our collaborations regionally through creation of a South-to-South learning network



### CAPACITY

Build capacity in the application of behavioural economics to health





## Wits Reproductive Health and HIV Institute (Wits RHI)

### Tuberculosis Vaccine

Given its heavy burden of TB-associated disease and death, South Africa has a major interest in the development of an effective new TB vaccine.

The only available vaccine,

the Bacille Calmette-Guérin (BCG) vaccine, was developed 80 years ago. Several vaccine candidates are currently in the pipeline, and the M72/AS01E candidate vaccine (M72) generated considerable excitement in 2018 when the first results from a phase IIB trial indicated it was 50% effective in reducing pulmonary TB in adults with latent TB infection.

The Wits Reproductive Health and HIV Institute (Wits RHI) was part of a multisite study to evaluate the safety and immunogenicity of the M72 vaccine in people living with HIV, who are taking ART and are virally suppressed (MESA-TB). This has set the stage for a phase III study on M72, CommuniTB, due to start in early 2024. The study is funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Medical Research Institute. Professor Lee Fairlie is the National PI and is the Chair of the trial steering committee.

### SAPRIN COVID Study



Wits RHI conducted the SAPRIN COVID study, a combined seroprevalence and knowledge, attitudes, and practices (KAP) survey of about 750 households in the Hillbrow area of Johannesburg, Atteridgeville, and Melusi area of Tshwane, as part of the Gauteng Research Triangle (GRT) and SAPRIN platform.

A key objective of the SAPRIN COVID study was to analyse knowledge, attitudes, and practices about Covid-19 and vaccination, examine how measures taken to mitigate the spread of infection affect society, economy, and health, and determine what percentage of the urban sample has already been infected.

Data analysis was completed in early 2022, revealing that more than 600 of the 759 blood samples collected were positive for SARS-CoV-2.

The Gauteng Research Triangle is a collaboration of Wits University, the University of Johannesburg, and the University of Pretoria. The GRT generates original research aimed ultimately at advancing economic performance and improving social conditions in Gauteng.

SAPRIN, the South African Population Research Infrastructure Network:

- Is a project of the Gauteng Research Triangle.
- Is funded jointly by the SAMRC and the Department of Science and Innovation.
- Provides research infrastructure for health and demographic surveillance.
- Seeks to generate longitudinal data on the health and social and economic wellbeing of populations in three Gauteng communities.
- Has a special interest in the dynamic flows of population between impoverished rural areas and Gauteng's cities.

SAPRIN aims to:

- Provide a versatile interdisciplinary research platform.
- Generate data for policy development and evaluation.
- Produce regularly updated reports on population health and social and economic wellbeing.
- Establish links with the national statistics system.
- Engage effectively with community structures.
- Contribute to postgraduate research training and career development.

By December 2022 SAPRIN had:

- Collected baseline data from nearly 26,000 residents of Hillbrow.
- Forged critical relationships with local organisations – security companies, landlords, health and development structures, and business initiatives – that helped build trust between SAPRIN staff and residents.



### The ADVANCE and CHARACTERISE Studies

The ADVANCE and CHARACTERISE studies close in 2022. These studies, along with TRIO (an international collaboration pooling data from these and other critical African studies), were part of a large portfolio of work led by Wits Ezintsha, which aimed to ensure optimal first line HIV treatment for people living with HIV. More than 1000 participants were recruited in central Johannesburg.

ADVANCE showed that dolutegravir-containing antiretroviral treatment (ART) performed extremely well in terms of safety and efficacy regimens, with the dolutegravir arms achieving rapid suppression of the virus.

Primary data was published in the NEJM and Lancet HIV. Over 30 publications have resulted from the data to date, informing both local and international guidelines.

The study also established that weight gain is a major concern in the treatment of people with HIV, and in particular black women.

CHARACTERISE was a cross-sectional, observational study to gain more data on the transition to dolutegravir-based regimens in South Africa in terms of the emergence of obesity, viral re-suppression, and integration into routine programme care, with preliminary data published in Clinical Infectious Diseases.

ADVANCE and CHARACTERISE have been presented in oral presentations at the leading international HIV conferences and have attracted major attention from the scientific community as two of the most important HIV treatment studies of the last decade.

In 2022, the TRIO project began to undertake comparative analysis of results that included two other trials, NAMSAL and DolPHIN-2 addressing (i) the risk of adverse birth outcomes by treatment arm, (ii) HIV RNA re-suppression after initial virological failure, and (iii) the risk of clinical obesity, metabolic syndrome and associated adverse events. Publication of the analysis is expected in 2023.



Photographs: ADVANCE study.



Watch the documentary video:  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A82-yHha\\_u4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A82-yHha_u4)



### ASSAf Gold Medal for Professor Karen Hofman

Karen Hofman is a Research Professor and Founding Director of the South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC)/Wits Centre for Health Economics and Decision Science (PRICELESS SA) in the School of Public Health, Faculty of Health Sciences.

A Wits Medical School graduate, Hofman has since 2009 led policy research to evaluate interventions inside the health system and in other sectors that provide the biggest return on investment for health.

Hofman received the ASSAf 2022 Science for Society Gold Medal for her application of scientific thinking in the service of society, the results of which mean that we as a population are healthier.

#### Saving lives from salt and liquid sugar

The bread eaten by South Africans today has significantly less salt in it than it did 10 years ago. This is the result of mandatory regulations based on PRICELESS SA research that showed how many lives could be saved from averting strokes and the cost savings of doing so. Salt reduction is one of the most cost-effective interventions for population health.

Similarly, we now have choices when we order sugar sweetened beverages (SSBs). Hofman was instrumental in driving the Health Promotion Levy ('sugar tax'), based on rigorous scientific research, towards reducing consumption of SSBs in order to advance public health. Liquid sugar is a major contributor to obesity, starting in childhood and extending across the lifespan, with obesity-related disease numbers now having overtaken HIV/Aids in SA.

This demonstrates how intersectoral action is essential to improve population health.

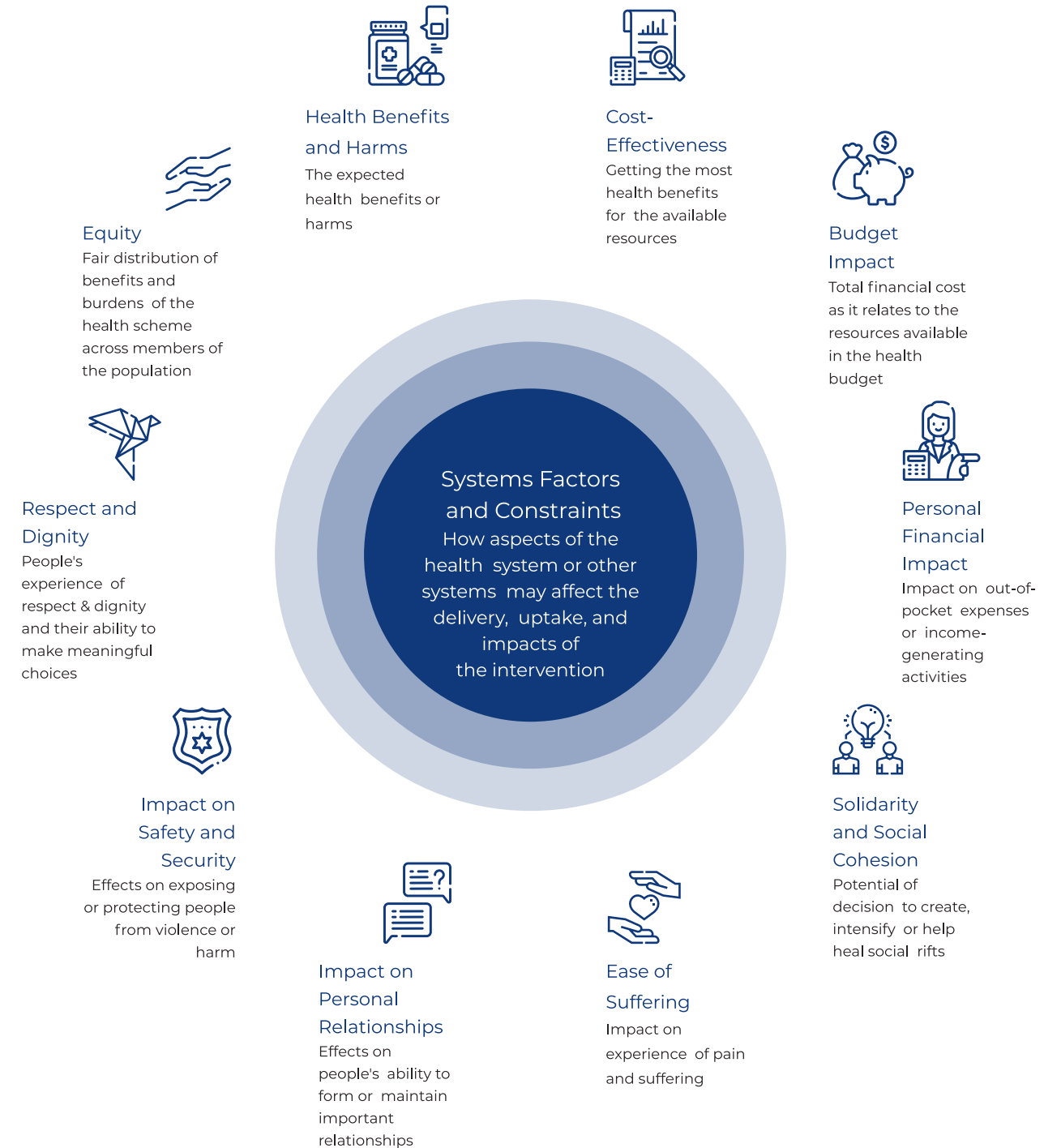
Hofman's work on universal health coverage has strategically focused on priority-setting, a key driver to implement a sustainable National Health Insurance (NHI) by doing research to inform health benefit packages and decisions to improve both health systems and population health outcomes.

According to the citation, Hofman embodies the essence of the Science for Society award by conducting transdisciplinary research – she identifies policy relevant issues; engages with various relevant publics before, during and after the research endeavour; and commits time and has the expertise to disseminate the research evidence through channels both academic and, importantly, media, as well as direct public engagement.

## Egon Jonsson Award for SA Ethics and Values Framework

Health Technology Assessment International (HTAi) awarded authors including PRICELESS SA's Professor Susan Goldstein, Dr Atiya Mosam, Dr Aviva Tugendhaft, and Professor Karen Hofman its prestigious Egon Jonsson Award for the article<sup>1</sup> they co-authored, titled Developing and piloting a context-specified ethics framework for health technology assessment: the South African Values and Ethics for Universal Health Coverage approach.

HTAi is a professional society dedicated to shaping the future of healthy systems and improving health outcomes for all people. The final South African Values and Ethics Framework (SAVE-UHC) consists of 12 domains (Figure 1) and will be a useful tool not only for HTAi and other prioritysetting processes in South Africa, but for future efforts to create health technology assessment methods here and possibly other countries developing their own frameworks.



<sup>1</sup> Krubiner CB, Barsdorf NW, Goldstein SJ, Mosam A, Potgieter S, DiStefano MJ, Tugendhaft A, Merritt MW, Li R, Chalkidou K, Faden RR, Hofman KJ. Developing and piloting a context-specified ethics framework for health technology assessment: the South African Values and Ethics for Universal Health Coverage approach. *Int J Technol Assess Health Care*. 2022 Mar 8;38(1):e26. doi: 10.1017/S0266462322000113. PMID: 35256036.



## WITS VIDA

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND  
VACCINES & INFECTIOUS DISEASES ANALYTICS

### Wits Vaccines and Infectious Diseases Analytics Research Unit (Wits VIDA)

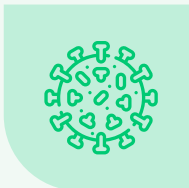
In the pursuit of global well-being and sustainable development, Wits VIDA has made significant strides over the past year in alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Here are key accomplishments and projects reflective of our commitment to these goals:



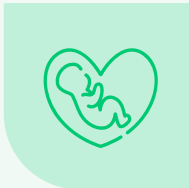
#### SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being

- Ä **Covid-19 Vaccines:** Wits VIDA has undertaken extensive research on Covid-19 vaccines, evaluating safety, immunogenicity, efficacy, and effectiveness. This includes a Phase 1 SARS-CoV-2 vaccine study and investigations into COVID-19 booster vaccines.
- Ä **Maternal Immunization:** Our efforts in maternal immunization include studying immunological correlates of protection against Group B streptococcal disease in infants. Additionally, a phase 3 trial is underway to assess the efficacy and safety of an RSV prefusion F-subunit vaccine in infants born to women vaccinated during pregnancy.
- Ä **Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine (PCV):** Wits VIDA has demonstrated non-inferiority in the immunogenicity of a 1 + 1 PCV schedule compared to a 2 + 1 schedule, potentially leading to significant public-health cost-saving benefits.
- Ä **Child Health and Mortality Surveillance Programme (CHAMPS):** Our eighth year of the CHAMPS program focuses on reducing childhood deaths, addressing prematurity, intra-partum events, and infections as major contributors to under-five mortality.



#### SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals

- Ä **Vaccine Hesitancy (VACSAFE Consortium):** Wits VIDA's research on vaccine uptake has informed recommendations for strategic communication to government stakeholders. Additionally, our ongoing research, funded in early 2023, contributes to building trust and addressing vaccine hesitancy. Wits VIDA collaborates on vaccine rollouts, monitors adverse events post-immunization, and conducts surveillance studies on SARS-CoV-2 infection epidemiology among healthcare workers, aligning with the collaborative spirit of Goal 17.



#### SDG 5: Gender Equality

- Ä **Pregnancy Surveillance:** Wits VIDA has expanded pregnancy surveillance through CHAMPS and the National Pregnancy Exposure Registry (NPER). NPER aims to provide critical information on birth outcomes, linking them to therapeutic exposures in women living with HIV and those not living with HIV, contributing to gender-sensitive health outcomes. Additionally, our social behavioural sciences work delves into understanding barriers and motivations around pregnancy-related health-seeking behaviours.



#### SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure

- Ä **Adverse Events of Special Interest (AESIs):** Wits VIDA conducts ongoing sentinel surveillance of AESIs post-COVID-19 vaccination, contributing to a robust infrastructure for monitoring vaccine safety and aligning with the innovation aspect of Goal 9. Our research spectrum spans pre-clinical development through to clinical investigation of vaccines and novel interventions in vaccine-preventable diseases. This, coupled with our leading research laboratory facility and team, contributes to international clinical research innovation, economic, and industry-serving outcomes. Notably, our recent findings on the PCV could assist LMICs in reducing the cost of national immunizations.

These accomplishments underscore Wits VIDA's dedication to advancing the SDGs, promoting health, fostering partnerships, addressing gender disparities, and contributing to innovation for sustainable development.





# WITS HEALTH CONSORTIUM



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