

Keynote speakers



Prof Ntobeko Ntusi

Professor Ntobeko Ntusi is the President and CEO of the South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC) effective 1 July 2024. He joins the SAMRC from the University of Cape Town and Groote Schuur Hospital where he was the Chair and Head of the Department of Medicine. He is a distinguished and highly respected figure in the medical community as a key global opinion leader. His lifelong passion for evidence-based healthcare, health systems research, noncommunicable disease multimorbidity, and universal health coverage has positioned him as a trailblazer in medical research.

Prof. Ntusi is committed to advancing medical research and innovation; and is passionate about improving healthcare outcomes aligned with the SAMRC's mandate to advance the nation's health and quality of life. His leadership spans various national, regional, and international platforms, where he has played pivotal roles in shaping academic agendas, postgraduate medical education standards, and advancing key national strategic priorities. His commitment to mentoring young professionals and supervising postgraduate students underscores his passion for nurturing the next generation of medical leaders, instilling hope for the future of medical leadership.

Prof. Ntusi obtained a BSc(Hons) degree in Cellular and Molecular Biology from Haverford College, USA, and an MBChB degree from the University of Cape Town. He is a qualified physician and cardiologist, and holds numerous additional qualifications, including a DPhil in Cardiovascular Medicine from the University of Oxford, St. Cross College, and an MD in Cardiology from the University of Cape Town.

Through his research partnerships and collaborations, he has extensive experience with basic science, translational and clinical research. He has built strong links with colleagues in clinical medicine, immunology, molecular genetics, physics, biomedical engineering, and biomedical statistics; and he has shown capacity for performance in scientific investigational teams and is suited to being part of multi-disciplinary and multi-centre clinical studies.

Prof. Ntusi provides key scientific leadership globally through boards and scientific advisory committees of numerous organisations he serves on.

Dr Michelle Mulder



Dr Michelle Mulder has a doctorate in Medical Microbiology from the University of Cape Town and has post-doctoral experience in a start-up biotechnology company emanating from the University of Cambridge (UK). She spent 10 years consulting on technology innovation through her own company and has been involved for the last 17 years in the strategic management and commercialization of the SAMRC's intellectual property and in capacity building in these areas in Southern and East Africa.

Dr Mulder has also spent the last 8 years managing grant funding for the SAMRC. She is Executive Director of the Grants, Innovation and Product Development unit at the SAMRC which manages most of the external grant funding and all innovation activities of the SAMRC. Michelle served as a member of the Executive Committee of the Southern African Research & Innovation Management Association (SARIMA) for 10 years, including 3 years as Vice President: Innovation and Technology Transfer, and 2 years as President. She served previously as Chair of the Board of Acorn Technologies, a life sciences incubator, a director of the Licensing Executive's Society South Africa, the South Africa Liaison for the Life Sciences Committee of LESI, and a member of the Higher Education South Africa (HESA) Strategy Group for Innovation and Technology Transfer. She currently serves as a board member of the Biologicals and Vaccines Institute of SA (Biovac) and two SAMRC linked companies and is a member of the NHLS Research and Innovation Committee.



Prof Charles Shey Wiysonge

Extraordinary Professor Wiysonge is a public health physician, global immunization leader, and implementation scientist with more than 25 years of experience translating research into policy and practice. He currently advises the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) on immunization. He previously served as Team Lead for the Vaccine-Preventable Diseases Programme at the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for Africa, Senior Director at the South African Medical Research Council, and Director of Cochrane South Africa.

Professor Wiysonge has authored more than 500 peer-reviewed publications and has extensive experience in evidence synthesis, health systems strengthening, research capacity development, and mentoring emerging African scientists. He is an Extraordinary Professor of Global Health at Stellenbosch University and a member of the Academy of Science of South Africa. His work focuses on transforming high-quality evidence into equitable policies, effective programmes, and measurable health impact.



Prof Alison September

Professor Alison V. September is Professor of Physiological Sciences and Deputy Director of the Health through Physical Activity, Lifestyle and Sport (HPALS) Research Centre at the University of Cape Town. A geneticist by training, she has more than 25 years of experience in biomedical and health research, with a particular focus on the genetics and genomics of musculoskeletal injury.

She co-leads the international GenOmics of Soft Tissue INjuries (GOINg) consortium, bringing together researchers across Africa, Europe and Australia. Her work spans genetics, genomics and health sciences, with a strong focus on building research capacity and developing the next generation of researchers. Her research contributions have been recognised nationally and internationally, including Fellowship of the National Academy of Kinesiology (USA), Fellowship of the European College of Sport Science, membership of the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf), and being named Second Runner-up in the Distinguished Woman Researcher category at the 2025 SAWiSA Awards.

For Prof September, research leadership is ultimately about people – building relationships, creating opportunities and helping good ideas and good researchers flourish.

Prof Teke Apalata



Professor Teke Apalata is an Associate Professor, Specialist Clinical Microbiologist, Data Scientist, and Global Health Strategist with over 17 years of experience integrating clinical medicine, diagnostic microbiology, translational research, and quantitative data science. His research focuses on drug-resistant tuberculosis and genomics, HIV-associated multimorbidity and non-communicable disease (NCD) syndemics, antimicrobial resistance, sexually transmitted infections, implementation science, and AI-enabled precision medicine.

He has authored over 140 peer-reviewed publications and supervised over 100 postgraduate students and emerging researchers, including 21 PhD candidates and 10 postdoctoral fellows. His leadership experience includes serving as Associate Dean for Research and Innovation, Head of Laboratory Medicine and Pathology, and Director of CRADLE at the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, iYunivesithi Walter Sisulu, contributing to the training of thousands of medical students and researchers. Prof Apalata has collaborated internationally with organizations including the WHO, CDC, and USAID to advance research capacity and strengthen laboratory systems and global health security.



Prof David Katerere

Professor David Katerere is the Research Platform Chair of Pharmaceutical and Biotech Advancement in Africa (PBA²) at Tshwane University of Technology, co-director of TUT/CSIR Cannabis Research Hub and Chair of PharmaConnect Africa, a non-profit which is a premier convenor of the pharmaceutical industry in Africa. He is also a board member at UI-Global and the Association of African Medicinal Plant Standards (AAMPS).

Prof Katerere holds a PhD in Pharmaceutical Science from the University of Strathclyde, Scotland. He has worked in pharmaceutical and biotech practice and research in the past 27 years in 4 countries on 3 continents. He has several inventions to his name including the nutraceutical, Niselo and CovidConnect App for use in clinical trials and post-recovery. He has published over 50 journal articles and is co-editor of three books: Ethnoveterinary Botanical Medicines (T&F) (2010), Systems Analysis Approach for Complex Global Challenges (Springer) (2018) and Traditional and Indigenous Knowledge for the Modern Era (T&F) (2019), African Herbal Pharmacopoeia Second Edition (2026). He is a member of advisory committees of the South African Health Products Authority (SAHPRA) and a board member of the South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC). Prof Katerere teaches and researches across the pharmaceutical and biotech value chain including product development from medicinal plants (for food, nutraceuticals and medicines) and clinical testing, substandard and falsified medicines / vaccines and medicine governance.

He is a part competitive Toastmaster and is now a keen Rotarian and member of Pretoria Capital Club.

Prof Anthony Okoh

Prof Anthony Okoh is the Director of SAMRC Microbial Water Quality Monitoring Centre and Chairholder of a Tier 1 SARChI in Water Quality and Environmental Genomics at the University of Fort Hare.

He has published over 530 journal articles and supervised 66 PhD and 81 Master's degree students. He is a recipient of the Gold Scientific Achievement Award of the South African Medical Research Council. He also served as President of the South Africa Society for Microbiology (2011-2013). The World Scientist and University ranking 2026, ranked him #1 in South Africa and Africa, and #115 globally in the microbiology discipline based on citations. He is a member of the Academy of Science of South Africa and fellow of six societies/academies including the African Academy of Sciences; Royal Society of Biology; Nigerian Academy of Sciences; and The World Academy of Sciences. His current H-index is 88 and citations is 34952.

