



CAPRISA

CENTRE FOR THE AIDS PROGRAMME OF RESEARCH IN SOUTH AFRICA

Newsletter

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Long-term impact of a TAF implant for HIV prevention

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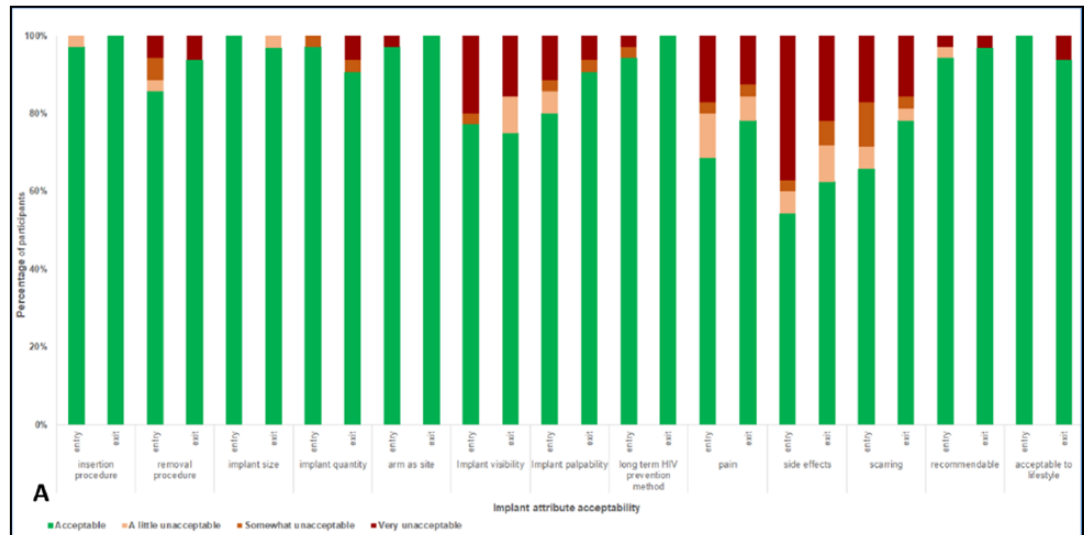
CAPRISA researchers have published new findings in the Journal of the International AIDS Society on the longer-term effects of a tenofovir alafenamide (TAF) sub-dermal implant for HIV prevention. The study followed 35 women in Durban, South Africa, who had previously participated in the CAPRISA 018 Phase I trial, to understand whether implant site reactions resolved after removal and how these experiences influenced PrEP preferences.

At study entry, a median of 299 days after implant removal, all participants still had mild visible scarring at the insertion site. Small numbers also had hyperpigmentation, induration or hypopigmentation. By 12 months of follow-up, scarring remained present in all women for a median duration of 623 days from implant removal, while most other local reactions had resolved. Although these cosmetic effects are clinically mild, they matter because they can affect comfort, discretion and confidence in using long-acting HIV prevention.

Importantly, the study also found continued interest in long-acting prevention. Most participants rated the implant's size, number, insertion/removal procedures and fit with daily life as acceptable. For women at high risk of HIV, especially in settings where discreet prevention options are important, these product characteristics will influence uptake. Scarring itself was considered acceptable by 78.1% of participants at study exit, up from 65.7% at enrolment.

A 12-month implant was the most preferred PrEP option at month 12, followed by a 6-monthly injection. These findings show that women value the convenience and adherence benefits of long-acting PrEP, but that local tolerability remains critical. The results provide important user-centred guidance for the development of next-generation HIV prevention implants that are both effective and acceptable.

For further reading: Gengiah TN, Lewis L, Harkoo I, et al. *Journal of the International AIDS Society*. 2026 Apr 16;29(4):e70107. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jia2.70107>



Participant ratings of implant acceptability at enrolment and study exit. Most implant attributes remained acceptable over time, while side effects from insertion-site reactions received the highest unacceptable ratings. Scarring persisted, but its acceptability improved during follow-up.

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2026 AAP/ASCI/APSA meeting

CAPRISA's Associate Scientific Director Professor Quarraisha Abdool Karim delivered a keynote presentation at a joint meeting of the Association of American Physicians, the American Society for Clinical Investigation and the American Physician Scientists Association at Chicago, Illinois. She said, "Today, we meet at a time when we have a polycrisis: climate change, global inequities, wars, pandemics and infodemics. Wars and conflicts create a fertile place for outbreaks and epidemics," she continued. "Science is forward-looking and about searching for truth. We are in a situation where there is a blurring of scientific evidence with political opinion and mis- and dis-information being amplified through social media."



Pics left to right: Prof Quarraisha Abdool Karim at the AAP/ASCI/APSA joint meeting. Prof Abdool Karim with President of the Albert and Mary Lasker Foundation, Claire Pomeroy. Pic credit: American Physician Scientists Association, Lasker Foundation



One Health Summit

Professor Salim Abdool Karim attended the One Health Summit in Lyon, France, one of the flagship events of the G7 French Presidency. Among the meetings objectives are to develop solutions to strengthen health and surveillance systems in order to prevent health, food, and environmental risks that impact our populations and to reiterate the importance of science, research, and innovation. The World Health Organization (WHO), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH), and UN Environment Programme (UNEP) officially promote this approach globally. The concept is an evolution of an original approach advocated by veterinary epidemiologist Dr. Calvin Schwabe's "One Medicine" approach that sought to bridge human and veterinary medicine to combat zoonotic diseases or infectious illnesses that jump from animals to humans, causing infections ranging from mild to fatal.

Professor Salim Abdool Karim, Rodrigo Scotini CEO of the Infectious Diseases Alliance (IDA) and French physician Michel Kazatchkine

Director of Research and Innovation at VinUniversity in Hanoi, Vietnam - Professor Phung Viet Bac - visited CAPRISA where he met with Professors Salim and Quarraisha Abdool Karim, senior scientists and representatives from the UKZN's Nelson Mandela School of Medicine and School of Health Sciences. The visit explored the opportunities and potential for collaboration in research and education through academic exchange. CAPRISA and UKZN have an existing student exchange with VinUniversity.



Left to right: Dr Sharana Mahomed (CAPRISA), Prof Quarraisha Abdool Karim (CAPRISA), Bhavna Maharaj (UKZN), Prof Phung Viet Bac (VinUni), Minh Phuong (VinUni), Prof Frasia Oosthuizen (UKZN), Dr Kimesh Naidoo (UKZN), Dr Nivashnee Naicker (CAPRISA), Prof Salim Abdool Karim (CAPRISA)



Long acting ARVs show positive results

The 3rd IMPALA Investigators' Meeting, convened from 10–11 March 2026 in Cape Town, marked a significant and reflective milestone as the IMPALA study approached its conclusion. Investigators and collaborators from South Africa, Kenya, and Uganda presented comprehensive site-specific findings spanning a 24-month follow-up period, collectively illustrating the scientific rigor and operational excellence achieved across participating sites. The results underscored the substantial contributions of both study participants and multidisciplinary research teams, highlighting the study's impact on advancing HIV prevention and care within diverse African contexts.

Representing the Durban clinical research site, Site Principal Investigator and CAPRISA's Head of HIV Pathogenesis Dr Sharana Mahomed and Lead Clinician Dr Upasna Singh were in attendance, contributing to both the scientific discussions and strategic reflections on future directions. Their participation highlighted the continued leadership and commitment

of the South African sites in driving high-impact HIV research. Mahomed says, *"Although the IMPALA study has formally concluded, the meeting reaffirmed that the collaborative networks, professional partnerships, and cross-country relationships established through this initiative will endure. These connections provide a robust platform for future multi-site collaborations aimed at addressing ongoing challenges in HIV prevention, treatment, and women's health across the African continent."*

- Sharana Mahomed



A team of CAPRISA researchers and scientists attended the MSD EXPRESSIVE-10 Annual Meeting in Cape Town. This Phase 3 clinical trial is investigating the safety and efficacy of MK-8527, an investigational once-monthly, oral nucleoside reverse transcriptase translocation inhibitor (NRTTI) for HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), specifically targeting women and adolescent girls in sub-Saharan Africa. This is opposed to the current standard, daily oral pill. This as young women and girls in sub-Saharan Africa continue to bear a disproportionate brunt of the HIV epidemic. Over 4-thousand participants have been registered at sites across Kenya, Uganda and South Africa.



World TB Day 2026: Listen to the patient



CAPRISA commemorated World TB Day on March 30th in conjunction with the African Health Research Institute (AHRI) and the UKZN's College of Health Sciences. The engagement shone a spotlight on the lived experience of people living with TB highlighting the human side of the disease beyond clinical statistics. This was followed by an expert panel discussion including renowned TB scientists and policy makers; CAPRISA Deputy Director Professor Kogie Naidoo, Chief Director for TB Control and Management at the National Health Department Professor Norbert Ndjeka, Head of the TB-HIV Treatment Programme at CAPRISA Professor Rubeshan Perumal, Director of Science at AHRI Professor Limakatso Lebina, group leader at the KwaZulu-Natal Research and Innovation Sequencing Platform Dr Richard Lessels and Head of Infectious Diseases at the Nelson Mandela School of Medicine, Professor Mahomed Yunus Moosa. Key takeaways included the importance of patient-centred care, the need for timely and accurate diagnosis, and the ongoing challenges posed by patients post-TB disease. The discussion also underscored the role of strengthened health systems, improved access to treatment, and continued investment in research and innovation. Overall, the event reinforced the urgency of addressing TB through scientific advances and a deeper understanding of the patient experience. - Senamile Ngema & Siyabonga Myawe

It's also been a busy time for CAPRISA's Community Outreach Team that engaged with several communities to raise awareness about TB and efforts to eliminate the disease. Messaging promoted early testing, symptom detection and treatment options and debunked the myths and stigma associated with TB. The team also conducted screenings, HIV testing and provided referrals to symptomatic individuals.



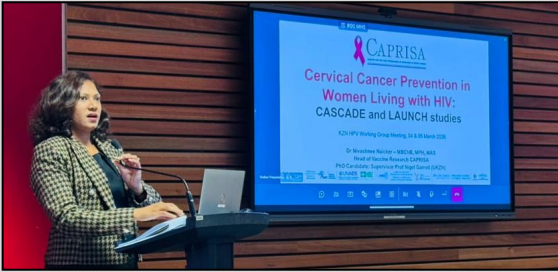
Pic credit: UKZN/Sethu Dlamini



HPV Working Group launched

The inaugural meeting of the KwaZulu-Natal Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Working Group brought together scientists, clinicians, laboratory services, policy makers and community health advocates not only to advance the knowledge and understanding of the disease, but to improve efficiencies across disciplines and to inform appropriate policy for local populations. It aims to strengthen collaborations across disciplines and to bring together experts in the relevant fields with the overarching goal of reducing the cervical cancer and other HPV-related disease burden in the province. KwaZulu-Natal has one of the highest burdens of HPV and HPV-related diseases in the country.

CAPRISA’s Head of Vaccine Research Doctor Nivashnee Naicker and HPV Working Group Scientific co-lead said, “I hope that this will be the start of a long-term collaborative efforts to ultimately reduce the burden of cervical cancer and other HPV-related diseases in the province and to improve and tailor current best practices for improved clinical outcomes for all.” Naicker is a recipient of the SAMRC Clinician Researcher Development Programme award for her work on cervical cancer prevention in women living with HIV. The network hopes to streamline efforts in cervical cancer prevention and the management of other HPV-related diseases.



Pics top left: Dr Nivashnee Naicker speaking to the CASCADE and LAUNCH studies. Bottom left: Co-chair of the HPV Working Group and Head of UKZN’s Obstetrics and Gynaecology Discipline Prof Motshedi Sebitloane. Right: Delegates at the 2-day session. Pic credit: AHRU

Microbes in Women’s Health Congress

Dr Disebo Potloane (pictured centre) shared the results of the VIBRANT trial at the Microbes in Women’s Health Congress In Valencia, Spain. Published earlier this year, the study demonstrated that a multi-strain probiotic (vaginal tablet) could restore protective bacteria and reduce BV recurrence. Potloane, who led the trial at CAPRISA’s rural South African research clinic said, “HIV remains a major challenge in young women in Africa and reducing their risk of infection has been an elusive goal. The encouraging results of the VIBRANT trial bode well for development of strategies aimed at removing a fundamental cause of their HIV risk.” Read the full statement here, [Multi-Strain Probiotic Therapy Shows Promise in Preventing Bacterial Vaginosis Recurrence.](#)



Left to right: Callin Chetty, Dr Andile Mtshali, Dr Disebo Potloane, Dr Gugu Mzobe and Dr Tanuja Gengiah



A selection of scientific papers published in 2026

- 11 Lazarus JV, Kopka CJ, Nicolàs A, **Abdool Karim S**, Bansal MB, Betel M, Dillon JF, Gines P, Krag A, Miller V, Moylan CA, Pedrana A, Petrone P, Schattenberg JM, Solomon SS, Terrault N, Dow E, Thiele M. Lessons learned from viral hepatitis testing that inform law and policy responses to steatotic liver disease. *Nat Rev Gastroenterol Hepatol*. 2026 Apr;23(4):355-367. doi: 10.1038/s41575-026-01174-z
- 12 Ndjeka N, **Perumal R**, Romanowski K, Mathema H, **Amusa LB**, Campbell JR, Conradie F, Schaaf HS, Meintjes G, Romero R, Menzies D, Oelofse S, Dheda K, **Naidoo K**. Treatment outcomes and drug-related adverse events across four short-course RR-TB regimens in South Africa: A retrospective analysis. *Int J Infect Dis*. 2026 Apr;165:108473. doi: 10.1016/j.ijid.2026.108473.
- 13 **Passmore JS**, Nieves Delgado A, Happel AU. Ethical design as a prerequisite for translational microbiome science. *Microbiome*. 2026 Apr 7;14(1):108. doi: 10.1186/s40168-026-02371-3. PMID: 41947254
- 14 Hathaway CL, Brown ER, Cherne S, Sepulveda AL, Chirenje ZM, Jeenaarain N, Naidoo L, Siva S, Singh N, Woeber K, Gaffoor Z, Mirembe BG, Kiweewa FM, **Mansoor LE**, Chinula L, Dadabhai S, Mugo NR, Palanee-Phillips T, Barnabas RV. Association of human papillomavirus on risk of HIV acquisition in African women: analyses from MTN-020/ASPIRE. *J Natl Cancer Inst*. 2026 Mar 1;118(3):485-491. doi: 10.1093/jnci/djaf336
- 15 **Naidu L, van der Molen J**, Jugathpal V, Sookrajh Y, Khubone T, Hobe L, Ngwenya T, **Tihaku K, Mahomed S, Garrett N, Brown JA**, Dorward J, Lewis L. Quality assessment of data for decentralised antiretroviral therapy referrals and laboratory results in the South African national electronic HIV management register TIER.Net. *PLOS Glob Public Health*. 2026 Mar 16;6(3):e0005534. doi: 10.1371/journal.pgph.0005534
- 16 **Dorward J, Tihaku K**, Sookrajh Y, **Munatsi P, Naidoo J, Tselana E, Maphumulo A, Mbambo N, Mhlongo-Gumbi T, Brown JA, Lewis L**, Moodley P, **Samsunder N**, Drain PK, Butler CC, Hayward G, **Garrett N**. Point-of-care HIV viral load testing in a community antiretroviral therapy delivery programme: A randomised controlled trial (PHILA). *PLOS Glob Public Health*. 2026 Mar 2;6(3):e0005890. doi: 10.1371/journal.pgph.0005890
- 17 **Perumal R**. Catalysing future research on the under-recognised burden of post-tuberculosis pulmonary hypertension. *African Journal of Thoracic and Critical Care Medicine*. 2026 Mar 31; 32(1):e4992. doi: 10.7196/AJTCCM.2026.v32i1.4992
- 18 Vince N, **Ramsuran V**, Viard M, Martinson J, Wolinsky S, Hussain S, Seaberg EC, Brown TT, Spence N, Thio CL, Goedert JJ, Hoots WK, Kirk GD, Carrington M. HLA Class II Protein Expression Regulation Is Strongly Linked to Cis-Acting SNPs. *HLA*. 2026 Apr;107(4):e70669. doi: 10.1111/tan.70669
- 19 Ebrahim S, Gloeck N, Adam Z, Tatz G, Nel J, Sinxadi PZ, **Dawood H**, Kredo T, Cohen K. Lenacapavir as pre-exposure prophylaxis for HIV prevention. *Cochrane Database Syst Rev*. 2026 Apr 1;4(4):CD016347. doi: 10.1002/14651858.CD016347
- 20 Nelson KN, Harton P, Cohen T, Willis F, Yoshii H, **Naidoo K**, Lutchminarain K, Campbell A, Omar SV, Auld SC, Brust JCM, Gandhi NR, Shah NS. COVID-19 pandemic changes in social behavior relevant for transmission of Mycobacterium tuberculosis. *BMC Res Notes*. 2026 Jan 24;19(1):83. doi: 10.1186/s13104-026-07675-z

For the complete list of publications see here: <https://www.capriza.org/Publication/1/1>



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