

RESEARCH

Royal Society honour for Durban TB expert

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TB expert and research scientist Professor Kogie Naidoo has been inducted as a fellow of the prestigious Royal Society in South Africa for her research over three decades in TB-HIV co-infection, and multidrug-resistant TB.

Naidoo, who is the deputy director and leads the HIV-TB treatment programme at the Centre for the Aids Programme in South Africa (Caprisa) in Durban, was inducted at an event in Cape Town on Saturday.

Born in Durban, she obtained her MBChB and PhD at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, where she is an honorary associate professor in the College of Health Sciences, and was among the first to implement public antiretroviral therapy (ART) services for people living with HIV more than 25 years ago.

In a statement, Caprisa said together with her colleagues, her research showed that starting antiretroviral treatment (ART) at the same time as tuberculosis treatment resulted in a 56% lower death rate, saving the lives of patients with HIV-TB co-infection. This work led to the WHO advice that co-treatment would now be the standard-of-care for people living with both HIV and TB.

According to Caprisa, Naidoo's induction was announced following consideration by the Society's Adjudication Committee and approval by the



PROFESSOR Kogie Naidoo signs the Fellowship Book as a newly inducted Fellow of the prestigious Royal Society of South Africa. | Supplied.

Council and current Society fellows. The Royal Society of South Africa is a learned society comprising eminent South African scientists and academics.

Speaking to *The Mercury* yesterday, Naidoo said the society had the most excellent research scholars across all disciplines in South Africa. She said not only were these experts from the health discipline, but across all science sectors including chemistry, maths, physics and the medical sciences.

"It's the brains trust for the intellectual capability of the country," she

said. Naidoo said that the society recognised people who do work that is responsive to the needs of the country, and for advancements in various sectors.

She said the fellowship does not come with any money or resources, "but it's really about excellence and the pursuit of excellence in science and in scholarly activities".

Naidoo said she was humbled and honoured that her work was being recognised.

"I'm delighted that my work is recognised and that I'm now part of this very eminent group of South African scholars who are making significant recognisable contributions to science in the country. It's also an affirmation and a validation that the work we do is on the right path. That the excellence of the work is being recognised," she said.

She added that it was amazing to receive the recognition as a female scientist, and she hoped that young girls would see her as a role model.

"Hopefully this will serve as a sort of a beacon for young girls wanting to pursue a career in science, technology, engineering or medicine," said Naidoo.

Caprisa said Naidoo was among South Africa's highly accomplished medical scientists playing a leading role in tuberculosis research, the leading cause of death in people living with HIV, and "has made significant contributions to the global understanding on TB-HIV treatment integration".