

Top award for SA doctor

CHRISTOPHE MERIEUX PRIZE: GEL THAT CUTS RISK OF HIV TRANSMISSION

» **Also hailed for work on vaccines and treating those with tuberculosis.**

Paris

A South African HIV researcher who found that a topical gel could stop many women contracting HIV, has been awarded one of France's top science prizes.

Quarraisha Abdool Karim won the €500 000 (close to R9.6 million) Christophe Merieux Prize for her work for the Durban-based Centre for the Aids Programme of Research, which she heads.

The Institut de France, which runs the prize, praised her work tracing "the cycle of transmission" of the virus, with "young women generally getting it from men 10 years their senior".

Professor Abdool Karim's study that found a gel of the antiretroviral drug tenofovir was effective in reducing the risk of



QUARRAISHA ABDOOL KARIM.

women catching HIV during sex. Abdool Karim, 60, has previously won SA's highest honour, the Order of Mapungubwe, as well as a L'Oréal-Unesco for Women in Science award.

Her husband, fellow epidemiologist Salim Abdool Karim, is the SA government's main scientific advisor for Covid-19. She also sits on the board of experts tackling the pandemic.

The award was due to be presented in Paris next week, but the ceremony was cancelled because of the coronavirus.

– AFP