



CAPRISA

CENTRE FOR THE AIDS PROGRAMME OF RESEARCH IN SOUTH AFRICA

Newsletter

Jan/Feb 2025 Volume 25 Issue 1

CAPRISA 018 Study Highlights Promise and Challenges of a Long-Acting HIV Prevention Implant

In this Issue

On page 1, we feature an article on a long-acting HIV prevention implant published in *JIAS*.

We report on the participation of Professors Salim and Quarraisha Abdool Karim in the 3rd ISC General Assembly & Muscat Global Knowledge Dialogue in Oman.

On page 3, we feature CAPRISA’s scientists honoured with SAMRC Scientific Merit Awards in Cape Town, and Dr Leila’s Mansoor’s notable quote in *Nature* for her ethical leadership.

On page 4, we featured Dr Leila Mansoor’s presentation of PURPOSE at ASICON 2025, as well as Prof Quarraisha’s participation in the celebration of the 10th Anniversary of the International Day of Women and Girls in Science.

We feature Prof Quarraisha Abdool Karim’s appointed as “John C. Martin Chair in Global Health” at CAPRISA on page 5.

The recent CAPRISA study assessed the acceptability of an annual tenofovir alafenamide (TAF) implant among South African women participating in a Phase I trial between 2020 and 2022.

Women aged a median of 26 years received one or two implants over 48 weeks. Acceptability was assessed based on implant attributes (size, visibility, palpability) and physical experiences (insertion, removal, and site reactions), rated on a 6-point scale. A score of >4 or higher was considered acceptable.

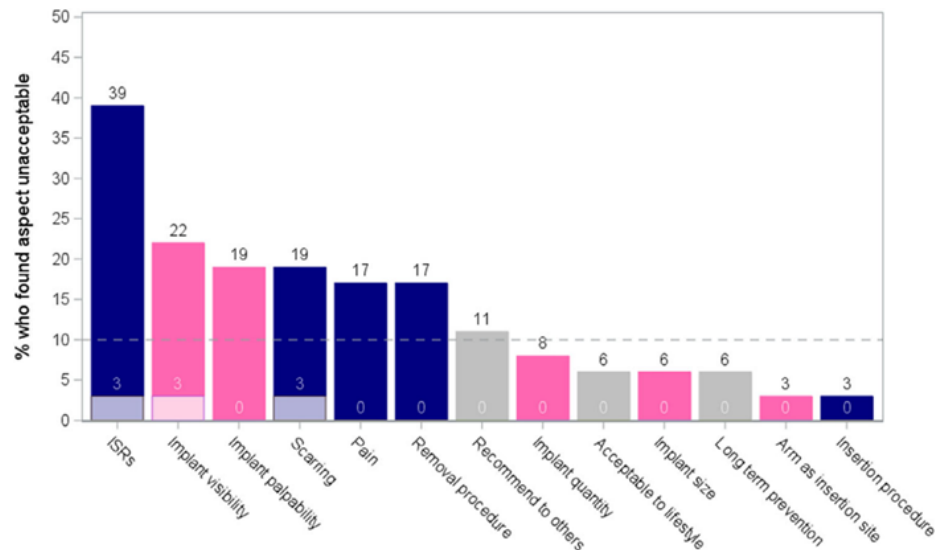
Overall, pre-removal acceptability scores were high—5.4 for product attributes and 5.1 for physical experiences. However, 31% of participants requested early implant removals, averaging 19 weeks after insertion. The most common concerns were implant site reactions (ISRs) (50% vs. 19% in scheduled removals), visibility (30% vs. 15%), and pain (16% vs. 4%). Adverse physical experiences were significantly associated with early removals ($p=0.05$).

Despite these challenges, most participants found the implant lifestyle-compatible (mean score: 5.8) and would recommend it (mean: 5.9). The biggest advantages were the potential for long-term HIV protection and discreet use, but ISRs remained the most disliked aspect.

In conclusion, the findings highlight the promise of an annual HIV prevention implant but underscore the need to improve tolerability, particularly ISRs, to maximize uptake and adherence. Addressing these concerns could enhance the feasibility of long-acting implantable PrEP for women at high risk of HIV.

For further reading see: *J. Int. AIDS Soc.* 2025, 28:e26426 <https://doi.org/10.1002/jia2.26426>

Figure: Percentage of participants reporting an implant aspect as unacceptable after implant removal. Physical experiences (blue), product attributes (pink) and grey bars (other) acceptability measures. Shaded portion of bar represents contribution of placebo implant recipients. ISRs, implant site reactions.



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CAPRISA participation in the 3rd ISC General Assembly & Muscat Global Knowledge Dialogue

Professors Salim and Quarraisha Abdool Karim attended the Muscat Global Knowledge Dialogue in Oman on 26-30 January 2025, hosted by the ISC Member in Oman, the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation.

This knowledge-sharing event was the premier occasion for ISC Members and partners from all domains of science and parts of the world to meet and engage in cross-disciplinary, strategic discussions on challenges, priorities and agendas for international cooperation in science.

As President of The World Academy of Science (TWAS), Prof Quarraisha Abdool Karim chaired a pre-event workshop titled, "Freedom and Responsibility in Science". She presented a talk in a session titled, "Rethinking International Science Collaboration for the 21st Century".

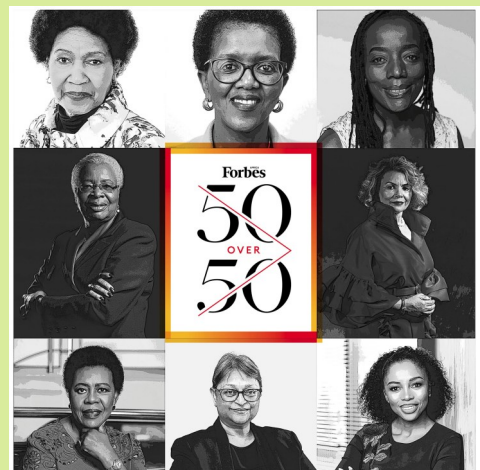
As CAPRISA Director and ISC Governing Board Member, Professor Salim Abdool Karim presented a talk titled, "Science to Policy: An example for the HIV pandemic", at a session titled, "Leveraging the ISC membership to strengthen science advice to policy". He participated in a panel discussion at the official opening session of the Dialogue, and presented in a session that reflected on the changing context for science diplomacy.



A trailblazer on the first-ever Forbes' 50 Over 50 Global list:

Professor Quarraisha Abdool Karim, Co-founder and Associate Scientific Director of CAPRISA, is listed one of Forbes' 50 Over 50 Global for 2025, as one of the world's leading HIV/AIDS researchers.

The pioneers on this list work across 32 countries and territories and are shaping everything from cybersecurity to science and even traffic safety. In building behemoth shipping companies, innovative biotech businesses and venture capital firms, these women are building wealth, creating jobs, and proving that age is not an impediment to making a lasting impact on the world.





CAPRISA Professors honoured with prestigious SAMRC Scientific Merit Awards

CAPRISA's esteemed scientists have been honoured with prestigious South African Medical Research Council awards for their outstanding contributions to health sciences at the 11th Scientific Merit Awards ceremony held in Cape Town, Durban, on 20 February 2025.

Professor Quarraisha Abdool Karim, received the prestigious SAMRC Platinum Lifetime Scientific Achievement Award in recognition of her exceptional scientific contributions that have shaped health research and policies in South Africa and globally.

CAPRISA Senior Scientist and Head of Treatment, Professor Rubeshan Perumal, has been awarded the

SAMRC Bronze Award, which recognizes emerging scientists with demonstrated potential to become established leaders in their field.

Their dedication to mentorship, capacity development, and scientific excellence ensures a lasting legacy for future generations of South African health scientists. These SAMRC awards highlight CAPRISA's commitment to producing world-class researchers who drive innovation and improve public health outcomes.

For more reading see here: <https://www.samrc.ac.za/about-us/11th-scientific-merit-awards>



Photo left: Prof Rubeshan Perumal (middle) receiving SAMRC Bronze Scientific Merit Award. Photo middle: The 11th SAMRC Scientific Merit Awards stage. Photo right: Prof Quarraisha Abdool Karim (middle) receiving SAMRC Platinum Scientific Merit Award.

Dr Leila Mansoor recognized for her bold leadership in response to the US funding freeze

Dr Leila Mansoor, Senior Scientist and Head of Quality Assurance at CAPRISA, received recognition by *Nature* for her ethical leadership in navigating a complex situation, after the US President Donald Trump announced a review of foreign funding for USAID and PEPFAR to South Africa and other countries on 20th January 2025 and pending a 90-day review of the foreign funding.

The CAPRISA MATRIX study had been impacted by the communication issued and all study participants had to be exited from the study. Dr Leila Mansoor took a brave stance and had spoken up for science and her concern for the participants in such trials, which led to *Nature* profiling her quote, "For me ethics and participants come first. There is a line."

Her ethics and values as a distinguished scientist at CAPRISA were not compromised and she stands her ground of ethical leadership, demonstrating remarkable integrity and compassion for the participants in-

involved in the trials, which has further attracted external recognition by scientists around the world and media. CAPRISA also commended Dr Mansoor with an iSpotU award in recognition of her ethical leadership.



For further reading see: <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-025-00440-5>

Photo (L-R): Prof Kogie Naidoo, Prof Quarraisha Abdool Karim, Dr Leila Mansoor, Prof Salim Abdool Karim.



Dr Leila Mansoor presented on Lenacapavir at the AIDS Society of India meeting- ASICON 2025

Dr Leila Mansoor participated in the 16th National Conference of the AIDS Society of India (ASICON) 2025 held in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, from 21-23 February 2025. She serves as the Purpose 1 Co-Principal Investigator at the CAPRISA eThekweni Clinical Research Site and was invited to present as a Faculty Member.

The scientific agenda of ASICON 2025 incorporated recent advances in HIV and other emerging infectious diseases, which included the new PrEP and treatment involving the groundbreaking HIV prevention drug, Lenacapavir. The purpose of Dr Mansoor’s presentation was to provide an update on Lenacapavir – evaluated in the Purpose 1 and 2 studies – to members of ASICON, including clinicians, pharmacists and other health care providers.



TWAS President celebrates 10th Anniversary of the International Day of Women and Girls in Science

Professor Quarraisha Abdool Karim participated in a high-level webinar organized by the Commission on Science and Technology for Sustainable Development in the South (COMSATS) as TWAS President on 11 February 2025, to commemorate the 10th Anniversary of the International Day of Women and Girls in Science (IDWGS).

Prof Abdool Karim was joined by H.E. Shaza Fatima Khawaja, Minister of State for IT & Telecommunications, Pakistan, and Ms Aban Marker Kabraji, Senior Regional Advisor for Climate and Environment, UNEP Asia-Pacific Region. The theme of the event, “Unpacking STEM Careers: Her Voice in Science”, recognized the invaluable contributions of women in STEM and underscored the importance of fostering an inclusive and enabling environment for their leadership in science and technology.

During this webinar, Prof Abdool Karim emphasized TWAS’s commitment to global collaboration, scientific excellence, and gender equality. She noted that women now make up 50% of the organization’s governing council and highlighted substantial investments in capacity-building efforts, including the Young Affiliates Network. As the first female president of TWAS, she stressed the importance of continued support for women in science, particularly through leadership and mentorship programs at the national level. Reflecting on her experiences as a South African scientist, she showcased how science can drive community empowerment and tackle pressing health issues.





Professor Quarraisha Abdool Karim appointed as “John C. Martin Chair in Global Health” at CAPRISA

Professor Quarraisha Abdool Karim has officially been appointed as the “John C. Martin Chair in Global Health” at CAPRISA.

This Chair was established through the generous support of the John C. Martin Foundation. CAPRISA is pleased to partner with the John C. Martin Foundation in recognizing the late Dr Martin’s global contributions in AIDS through this chair in global health.

As the John C. Martin Chair in Global Health, Prof Abdool Karim will contribute to global health, pursue innovative research, provide mentorship, deliver public lectures, and train infectious diseases researchers and students.



CAPRISA SHAPE programme presented to the Southern African HIV Clinicians Society

Senior Statistician Ms Lara Lewis and Honorary Research Scientist Dr Jienchi Dorward from the CAPRISA SHAPE programme presented to members of the Southern African HIV Clinicians Society (SAHCS) in a webinar titled, “Understanding the importance of HIV surveillance and programmatic data: insights for the clinician” on 13 February 2025.

The session was chaired by CAPRISA Honorary Research Associate Prof Nigel Garrett. Based on results from analyses of large programmatic data, Dr Dorward spoke about the impact of the dolutegravir treatment rollout in KwaZulu-Natal and Ms Lewis discussed how differentiated care services contribute to HIV treatment outcomes.

CME WEBINAR

UNDERSTANDING THE IMPORTANCE OF HIV SURVEILLANCE AND PROGRAMMATIC DATA: INSIGHTS FOR THE CLINICIAN



PROF NIGEL GARRETT



DR JIENCHI DORWARD



MRS LARA LEWIS



PROF MARY-ANN DAVIES

Programme:

- Welcome and introductions | Prof Nigel Garrett
- The Dolutegravir Rollout: first and second line treatment outcomes in KwaZulu-Natal | Dr Jienchi Dorward
- The Impact of HIV Differentiated Service Delivery on clinical outcomes | Ms Lara Lewis
- The HIV Care Cascade in the Western Cape: Viral loads, restarting ART and gaps in care | Prof Mary-Ann Davies
- Discussion and Q&A | All

DATE AND TIME:

- THURSDAY, 13 FEBRUARY 2025 AT 17H30-19H30 (SAST) (LIVE WEBINAR)
Register here: <https://bit.ly/3Ern0Se>
- TUESDAY, 18 FEBRUARY 2025 AT 13H00-15H00 (SAST) (PRE-RECORDED WEBINAR)
Register here: <https://bit.ly/4ht0ZfoG>



CAPRISA’s young researchers receive national awards



*Photo above:
Dr Andile Mtshali,
CAPRISA junior
scientist*

Dr Andile Mtshali (*left photo*), CAPRISA junior scientist, has been awarded the Thuthuka Post-PhD Track grant for 2025. This funding program by South Africa’s National Research Foundation (NRF) is designed to support the development of early-career researchers, female researchers, and researchers from underrepresented groups, which aims to build research capacity by providing financial assistance for post-graduate supervision, research projects, and academic career advancement.

Dr Zakia Salod (*right photo*), CAPRISA postdoctoral research fellow focusing on AI in health research, has been named one of South Africa’s Top 100 Shining Stars in the Science and Technology category (2024) by Inside Education. Her work explores the role of AI in improving healthcare systems, and she has been involved in initiatives to advance digital health solutions in Africa.



*Photo right: Dr Zakia Salod,
CAPRISA postdoctoral fellow*



A selection of scientific papers published in 2024

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- 84 **Abdool Karim S.** Medicine and the Law: What's in and what's out? Recommendations for developing a legally sound health technology assessment process for South Africa's National Health Insurance. *S. Afr. Med. J.* 2024;114 (9):e1893
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- 95 **Naidoo A**, Waalewijn H, **Naidoo K, Letsoalo MP, Dorse G, Perumal R, Osuala E, Zungu N, Msomi P**, Denti P and Dooley KE. Bictegravir exposures in adults with HIV and tuberculosis on a rifampicin-based tuberculosis treatment regimen. *Br J Clin Pharmacol.* 2024; 90:6. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/bcp.16284>
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* continuation from previous newsletter

For the complete list of publications see here: <https://www.capriska.org/Publication/1/1/2024>



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