



CAPRISA

CENTRE FOR THE AIDS PROGRAMME OF RESEARCH IN SOUTH AFRICA

Newsletter

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Biktarvy effective in suppressing HIV in HIV-TB co-treatment

Investigators at CAPRISA and Vanderbilt University led the CAPRISA 093 INSIGHT Phase 2b randomised trial, the first clinical study to evaluate bicitegravir–emtricitabine–tenofovir alafenamide 50–200–25 mg (Biktarvy®) for the treatment of HIV in people receiving rifampicin-based tuberculosis treatment. The study showed that twice-daily bicitegravir–emtricitabine–tenofovir alafenamide during rifampicin-based tuberculosis treatment achieves and maintains high rates of viral suppression over 48 weeks (Figure 1). Bicitegravir–emtricitabine–tenofovir alafenamide regimen coadministration with rifampicin was safe and well tolerated with no deaths, treatment discontinuations, or drug switches due to adverse events and none of the grade 3 or 4 adverse events or serious adverse events were assessed to be related to the study treatment. There were no study-defined treatment failures or emergent resistance in the bicitegravir group. Bicitegravir plasma concentrations were reduced during co-administration with rifampicin but remained above the inhibitory quotient (Figure 2).

The study provides supportive evidence for the use of twice-daily bicitegravir–emtricitabine–tenofovir alafenamide in individuals taking a rifampicin-based tuberculosis treatment regimen. These findings provide empiric evidence for expanded access to this treatment option in Africa and other low-income and middle-income countries where the option of bicitegravir–emtricitabine–tenofovir alafenamide is not yet available, and to support its inclusion as an alternate integrase-strand transfer inhibitor-based single-tablet fixed-dose combination in the WHO guidelines for the treatment of HIV. With its tenofovir alafenamide-based backbone, this regimen provides a better profile for renal and bone toxicity. Bicitegravir–emtricitabine–tenofovir alafenamide can be used in adults, adolescents, pregnant women, and children (ie, those aged >2 years and weighing no less than 14 kg), and now evidence from this trial expands its use to individuals with tuberculosis.

- Dr Anushka Naidoo

Figure 1

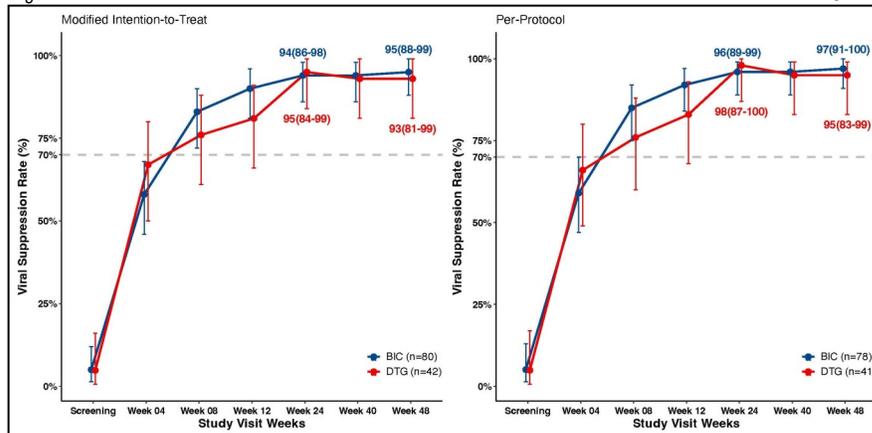


Figure 2

For further reading: Naidoo A, Naidoo K et al. Fixed-dose combination bicitegravir–emtricitabine–tenofovir alafenamide twice-daily for treatment of HIV during rifampicin-based tuberculosis treatment (INSIGHT study): a phase 2b, open-label, randomised non-comparative trial. *Lancet HIV*. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2352-3018\(25\)00200-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2352-3018(25)00200-0)

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Purpose driven science for humanity's benefit

Highlights from CAPRISA's 2026 Research Update



“Science with a purpose, science that matters. It is about ensuring that people live a dignified life. ”

- Dr. Mlungisi Cele, Director General, Department of Science, Technology and Innovation



Associate Scientific Director Professor Quarraisha Abdool Karim reflected on the tough lessons from 2025, commending scientists for “Seeing 2025 through with perseverance and persistence but also flourishing.”

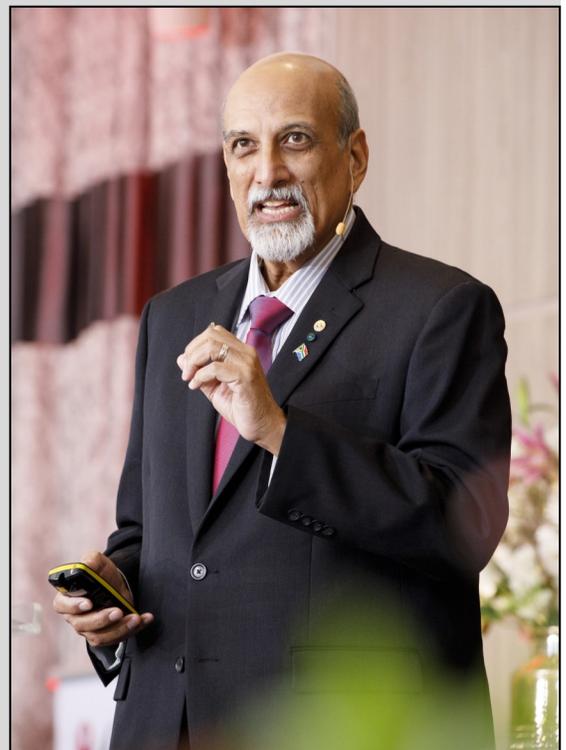


“The science that you produce does not end in publications. It is only when knowledge is translated to make sense for the individual whom it was created, that it works.”

Professor Refiloe Masekela, Dean of the Nelson Mandela Medical School, UKZN



CAPRISA Director Professor Salim Abdool Karim wrapped up his update with food for thought, “ Whether we like it or not, it’s here. The question is, are we ready for AI? We have to tackle the question head on. It has insidiously been entering our lives over the last decade.”



“Research and evidence based interventions to shape a healthier and prosperous future for the eThekweni Municipality.

- Cyril Xaba, eThekweni Mayor



Siyabonga, Merci, Thank you!

to our local & international collaborators for lending their time and their scientific expertise to the discussions



Photo Top (Left-Right): Precious Lukhele (DSTI), Doreen Ramogola-Masire (University of Botswana), Refiloe Masekela (Nelson Mandela Medical School), Happy Molefe (DSTI), Quarraisha Abdool Karim (CAPRISA), Nthabiseng Msomi (DSTI), Dineo Thebe (Botswana-Harvard Partnership(BHP), Gaerolwe Masheto (BHP), Francisco Saute (Mandica Research Institute, Mozambique), Evaezi Okpokoro (IHV-Nigeria), Buhle Khumalo (DSTI), Yunus Moosa (UKZN). Bottom (Left-Right): Julian Leshilo (DSTI), Mlungisi Cele (DSTI), Kogie Naidoo (CAPRISA), Modiegi Selematsela (DSTI), Sean Stowell (Harvard, USA), Kenny Tenza (DSTI), Salim Abdool Karim (CAPRISA), Sikhulile Moyo (BHP), Rodrigues Matcheve (Manhica-TESA, Mozambique), Richard Lessells (KRISP)

Ahead of our Research Update, we were pleased to host the Dr. Mlungisi Cele, Director General at the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation and his team. Dr Cele also visited our eThekweni Clinical Research Site in the heart of the bustling Durban CBD. Addressing the Research Update, Dr Cele said, “We choose science and action over fear and denial. Behind every clinical trial is a community that has placed its trust in science. We stand on the shoulders of President Mandela’s courage and countless South Africans including children like Nkosi Johnson. Like Madiba and Nkosi we choose science and action instead of fear and denial. Standing up for science at every turn and serving not only South Africa, but the world.”





Raising the bar for public health outcomes



Photo (Left-Right): Bonelwa Nogqaza (Research Assistant), Dr Safura Abdool Karim (Senior Scientist), Dr Petronell Kruger (Scientist) and Nosihle Zingani (Research Assistant)

Last year, Dr Safura Abdool Karim, Senior Scientist, received a Global Advanced Development Award from the National Institute for Health and Care Research, to create an interdisciplinary team to study the role of law in pandemic responses. This grant has now been used to establish a research programme to study how law can be used to improve public health outcomes, namely PILLAR (Piloting Integrated Legal Epidemiology for Law and Response-Readiness).

Areas of focus will include, pandemic preparedness and response, the regulation and ethics of using AI in HIV responses, commercial determinants of health, public health nutrition and bioethics. PILLAR's foundation is its expertise in law that is complimented and strengthened by research in sociology, public health nutrition, policy and bioethics. Team members include Dr Petronell Kruger, a public health lawyer, Nosihle Zingani, a clinical dietician and lawyer and sociologist, Bonelwa Nogqaza.

Through its work, PILLAR aims to inform public health policy, support legal reform, and contribute evidence-based solutions to proving public health. PILLAR's anchor grants include the aforementioned NIHR Award "*Leveraging the Law for Effective Pandemic Preparedness*" which pilots a new methodology for creating foundational legal data to inform the development of evidence pandemic preparedness laws and a sub-award under the NIHR-funded "*Collaboration for Harm Reduction and Alcohol Safety in the Environment in Southern Africa*".

The team is also involved in work related to public health nutrition, notably a project to investigate advertising of unhealthy foods and providing technical support to the National Department of Health to reform regulations for food labelling and infant formula in partnership with the Healthy Living Alliance and UNICEF, and research on industry accountability laws funded by Bloomberg Philanthropies. If you are interested in these projects, would like to collaborate, you are welcome to email Safura.abdoolkarim@caprisa.org.



Dedicated to the cause

CAPRISA's 2026 Long Service Awards recognised five sterling individuals for their 10 and 20-year contribution to the organisation. The annual awards that follow CAPRISA's Research Update is an important moment for the organisation to pause and applaud the stalwarts across its departments for their exceptional commitment and dedication to research excellence.

10 Year Awardees



Pamela Job, Senior HR Officer



Patience Mbatha, Tracker



Dr Sinaye Ngcapu, Head of Microbiome Research



Nokukhanya Khuzwayo, Senior Quality Assurance Officer



20 Year Awardee Precious Nozipho Radebe

Precious Nozipho Radebe is from Umlazi in KwaZulu-Natal. She has solidified her role in the data management team by working on severable critical studies over the last two decades. Notably among them, the SAPIT trial, Treatment Options After Seroconversion On Tenofovir (TOAST-CAP 009), Microbicide Implementation Trial (MIT-CAP 008) and Improving retreatment success of TB (IMPRESS). A highlight of her outstanding work has been her contribution to the landmark CAP 004 trial that demonstrated that a 1% vaginal gel formulation of tenofovir, an antiretroviral (ARV) drug, could effectively prevent HIV acquisition in women.



A selection of scientific papers published in 2025

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