Our feature story this month focuses on a qualitative assessment of the Centralised Chronic Medication Dispensing and Distribution (CCMDD) programme in South Africa.

On page 2 we highlight the 2020 Nobel Inspired lecture, “The meaning of science in the age of Covid-19” presented by two leading epidemiologists as well as the achievements of CAPRISA’s Fellows and Clinical Research Placement.

We report on the prestigious Gairdner Global Perspectives panel discussion held on 21st October and the development of the Advanced Clinical Care Curriculum adopted by the national Department of Health on page 3.

We congratulate Dr Cheryl Baxter who was awarded the CAPRISA iSpotU Award for Innovation.

**Figure caption:** Patient flow through CCMDD (adapted from Roberts, P. Centralized Chronic Medicine Dispensing and Distribution (2018). tinyurl.com/y3rdogjo)


Nobel inspired lecture - The meaning of science in the age of Covid-19

Professor Salim Abdool Karim (top right photo), co-chair of South Africa’s Ministerial Advisory Committee on Covid-19 and Sweden’s state epidemiologist Dr Anders Tegnell (bottom right photo) were the key participants in the 2020 annual Nobel Inspired Public Lecture themed “The meaning of science in the age of COVID-19,” hosted by the National Research Foundation (NRF) in partnership with the Swedish Embassy in Pretoria, on Thursday, 8th October.

The virtual lecture moderated by Ms Mia Malan, Editor-in-chief, Bhekisisa Centre for Health Journalism, explored the meaning of science, its promise, ethos and method, the sociology of science, the interplay between the social context and scientific knowledge, and the actual search for a cure for COVID-19.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has brought to the fore the importance of science and scientific research and the beneficial role to society played by researchers,” said NRF CEO, Dr Molapo Qhobela.

“We are delighted to have two such eminent leaders in the science of COVID come together in discussion,” said Ami Larsson-Jain, Charge d’Affaires at the Swedish Embassy in Pretoria. “It will be an opportunity to inspire the next generation of scientists and creative innovators in South African and Sweden, in the spirit of Alfred Nobel,” The speakers shared valuable insights into how the meaning of science changed for the “good, bad and complicated” in the era of COVID-19; lessons learned about communicating science effectively and; the challenges communicating with a magnitude of channels and social media platforms. “Covid-19 has made science accessible to everyone,” said Abdool Karim.

Tegnell and Abdool Karim agreed that the scientific process includes conflict and consensus. In Sweden, the public understands “that science is not always yes or no, it can also be something in between,” said Tegnell. “The public needs to understand that differences among scientists are not personal. It’s not conflict. It’s just the scientific process,” explained Abdool Karim. The event was held during the announcements of the Nobel Laureates, which was made from 5 and 12 October.

The lecture showcases research excellence and emphasises the importance of research, technology and innovation in addressing real challenges that confront communities. Watch a recording of the panel

Congratulations to CAPRISA Fellows and Clinical research Placement

We congratulate three CAPRISA colleagues on their recent achievements. Dr Benjamin Chimukangara (top photo), a postdoctoral Fellow at CAPRISA was awarded an Early Career Development Fellowship by the European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP). Chimukangara explained the fellowship grant awarded over a three-year period will support his research to investigate innovative molecular virology techniques to design methods for HIV-1 drug resistance testing that are affordable and accessible.

Ms Emmanuella Chinonso Osuala (middle photo), a Fellow at CAPRISA graduated with a Master of Pharmacy (MPharm) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal’s Spring graduation ceremony held on 30th October. The title of her dissertation was: Knowledge, attitudes and practices of patients and healthcare professionals regarding drug-food interactions at selected public hospitals in eThekwini district, KwaZulu-Natal; and CAPRISA Research Placement 6th-year medical student, Mr Kapil Narain (bottom photo) is among the 200 Young South Africans honoured by the Mail & Guardian newspaper in the health sector. Na-rain is the youngest in this category. ‘These are young people under the age of 35 who are shaping South Africa and who are going to be instrumental in the future’ said Mail & Guardian Chief Executive Officer, Mr Hoosain Karjieker.
Ten lessons from the HIV epidemic for the Covid-19 response was the focus of the presentations by Professors Salim and Quarraisha Abdool Karim at the Gairdner Global Perspectives Panel lectures held on a virtual platform, on Wednesday 21st October.

CAPRISA’s Director and Associate Scientific Director, laureates of the 2020 John Dirks Canada Gairdner Global Health Award announced earlier this year, were among eminent scientists, Drs Anthony Fauci, Peter Piot, Soumya Swaminathan and Zulfiquar Bhutta who participated in the high-level presentations and discussions.

“HIV and Covid-19 pandemics provided a new lens for the nexus between science, policy-making and global health,” said the Abdool Karims, “in pursing the sustainable development goals, with equity and social justice as guiding principles”.

As recipients of the 2020 John Dirks Canada Gairdner Global Health award, the Abdool Karims jointly delivered a presentation on 23rd October titled: HIV Prevention: Trials and Tribulations, which covered over three decades of HIV prevention research. The scientists paid tribute to their mentors: Profs Mervyn Susser, Zena Stein and Jerry Coovadia. In his congratulatory note, John Dirks said: “I am very glad you were selected and look forward to hearing your lectures this week, my only regret is that I won't be able to meet you in person”, he wrote.


### Development of national clinical training programme to improve health outcomes

The CAPRISA led development of the National Advanced Clinical Care (ACC) curriculum under the leadership of Professor Kogie Naidoo, head of HIV and TB Treatment Research at CAPRISA, is testament to translational research and underscores the strengthening of health systems to improve health outcomes. The inaugural virtual National ACC Master Trainer training was held from 6-30 October 2020.

The curriculum of the ACC Programme forms part of the South African National Department of Health NDoH) Knowledge Hub and the virtual audio training content will be used by trainees to train colleagues within their health care facilities and referral networks. A collaborative team of experts from CAPRISA, NDoH HAST unit, USAID, CDC, Clinton Health Access Initiative, SA HIV Clinicians Society, Wits Reproductive Health Unit, Kethimpilo, Beyond Zero, Foundation for Professional Development and Aurum, contributed to the overall structure development of the national programme.

The ACC Master Trainer training was a culmination of several years of dedicated effort by CAPRISA scientists Prof Kogie Naidoo and Dr Richard Lessells, working in collaboration with UKZN academics Prof Yunus Moosa, Dr Nithen Manickchund, Dr Mo Archary and Dr Sbu Kubeeka. The collaborative team developed the curriculum content including learning objectives and outcomes, slide sets, trainer manuals, learner manuals and knowledge assessment questions for the 4 modules and 25 sub-modules.

“The aim of this training was to improve clinical competency among health care workers in identifying and managing common clinical complexities that contribute to ongoing morbidity and mortality in HIV and HIV-TB” said Prof Kogie Naidoo, PI for the ACC grant.
*continuation from previous newsletter

**CAPRISA iSpotU Award for Innovation**

CAPRISA Senior Scientist in the Office of the Director, Dr Cheryl Baxter, was awarded the CAPRISA iSpot U award for innovation in recognition of her ‘tremendous effort’ in writing, co-ordinating and compiling the first joint CTU re-competition grant application.

"Baxter had displayed a high level of professionalism”, said CAPRISA’s Deputy Director, Professor Nesri Padayatchi, which resulted in submitting a ‘superb’ application.