

IRT-funded project

## Project 1: Schools as sites for social change: facilitating adjusted behaviour in resource-constrained communities by empowering children

*Major changes in consumption behaviour can be achieved through the empowerment of children with correct information and by providing them with adequate skills, lifestyle choices and access to nutritional products.*

The project focuses strongly on schools as “sites for social change” and on the training of teachers to impart health-related messages. In the long term, the aim is to encourage social responsible food production, food consumption and social change in resource-constrained communities by using children’s voices.

A parallel leg of the research recognises the fact that modern lifestyles are often characterised by sedentary behaviour and lack of exercise resulting in a global increase in chronic diseases. This is also evident in the recent explosion in the market of wellness centres, emphasising the need to explore the physiological components of overall wellness.

The project will also devise scores to serve as indicators of overall wellness. This will provide individuals with an understandable assessment of the current state of well-being. Over time, the impact of the health promoting interventions will be monitored and evaluated against this wellness index. This data will be modified for future research projects in other schools.

The research findings will contribute to the growing body of knowledge about nutrition and its impact on health in resource-constrained communities. This can assist decision-makers to adjust their strategies to meet the

broad objectives contained in the Millennium Development Goals, most notably:

- Goal 1 – Eradicating extreme poverty and hunger;
- Goal 4 – Reducing child mortality rates;
- Goal 5 – Improving maternal health; and
- Goal 7 – Ensuring environmental sustainability.

The project includes primary research and knowledge creation, combining the outputs of a team of researchers in collaboration with post-graduate students. This will result in capacity building and the transfer of experience to young researchers.

It focuses strongly on social responsibility that could translate into better well-being in a sustainable environment. The research is conducted at the psychosocial and cognitive interface between food, nutrition and well-being that relates to food and nutrition behaviours of communities and individuals.

It addresses sustainable natural resource management and vulnerability to risk by facilitating behaviour change that reduces the food carbon footprint and enhances environmental sustainability and healthy diets.



### Project leaders

- Prof Ronel Ferreira – see profile on page 89



**Ms Gerda Gericke** is Head of the Department of Human Nutrition at the University of Pretoria. With an MDiet from the UP her primary fields of research interest relevant to this study are eating behaviour; nutrition education to promote good health and nutrition behaviour change.

She has supervised several theses for the MDietetics degree on food intake and eating behaviour which contributed to her experience in the development of appropriate methodology and data collection techniques.

She was actively involved in the National Food Consumption Survey – Food Fortification

Study in 2005. Ms Gericke was responsible for developing and verifying the Knowledge, Attitude and Behaviour Questionnaire used for data collection and quality control and for interpreting and reporting the findings. In 1999 she was involved in a similar national study (National Food Consumption Survey-Food Fortification Baseline Study I) on the food consumption of children aged one to nine years. She served on an advisory committee for the SA National Health and Nutrition Survey (2012/13) and is the co-author of World Health Organisation publication on food security.

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**Prof Peet du Toit** is senior lecturer in the Department of Physiology at the UP. As part of

his drive to improve education methods, he has developed a number of multimedia packages, including: Sports Vision, Health Genius, Body Genius Performance Kit, Profile Genius and the Eye-drills online performance evaluation package. The Health Genius package, the Body Genius Performance Kit and the TEARS principle system were awarded Telematic Education Innovation Awards at the University of Pretoria. He is one of two nominees selected to represent UP at the National Heltasa Teaching Awards.

Prof Du Toit's lectures are evidence-based and therefore his research contributes significantly to the industry. He is currently supervising seven honours, 14 MSc and two PhD students. He has published 47 articles and presented at 73 conferences, workshops and short courses

He is a reviewer for SA Journal for *Research in Sport; Physical Education and Recreation; Stress; Journal of Anthropology; South African Journal of Education* and the *Journal of Sports Science and Medicine*. Prof Du Toit is a member of the Physiological Society of Southern Africa (PSSA), a member of the ACBSP-Accreditation Council For Business Schools & Programs, USA and a member of the ECBE-European Council For Business Education, Switzerland. He is also a founding member and chair of the Neuroscience research group at the University of Pretoria, Institute for Cellular and Molecular Medicine and an associate of the Institute for Food, Nutrition and Well-being.

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### Team members:

- Prof Peet du Toit – UP Department of Neuroscience and Physiology;
- Ms Karien Botha – UP Department of Educational Psychology;
- Dr Nicoleen Coetzee – Department of Psychology;
- Prof Elmarie de Klerk – Department of Consumer Science;
- Ms Nicki de Villiers – UP High Performance Centre;
- Prof Liesel Ebersöhn – Department of Educational Psychology;
- Prof Ronel Ferreira – Department of Educational Psychology;
- Prof William Fraser – Department of Curriculum Studies;
- Dr Rina Grant – Head of Research – Section Sports Medicine;

- Dr Craig Grobbelaar – Department of Physiology;
- Dr Christa Janse van Rensburg – Head: Section Sports Medicine;
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- Prof Ernst Kruger – Department of Biokinetics, Sports and Leisure Sciences;
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### Students:

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