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**PRESS RELEASE**

**15 October 2018**

**University of Pretoria launches Sport, Exercise Medicine and**

**Lifestyle Institute (SEMLI)**

A Sport, Exercise Medicine and Lifestyle Institute (SEMLI) was launched at the University of Pretoria (UP) on Thursday, with the Institute aiming to be a world leader in the promotion of safer exercise for the health of all.

UP’s Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof Cheryl de la Rey, said: “The launch of SEMLI strengthens UP’s sports science capacity, and reaffirms its position as the leading sports university in South Africa and on the continent.”

The Institute prioritises the use of existing and new technologies, such as wearable devices, smart phones, online technology, and cloud-based applications to conduct research, deliver education and provide specialist services in the fields of sport, exercise medicine and lifestyle interventions for chronic disease.

SEMLI is located on the University’s Hillcrest Campus, which is not only the training ground for future sporting heroes, but also offers world-class medical services and nutritional and scientific expertise to the general public.

It is primarily a research institute that focuses on research and teaching. However, it also includes a clinical and scientific services platform that provides specialist services to patients, clients, visiting national and international athletes, and the public. According to its Director, Prof Martin Schwellnus, it “serves as an experiential mechanism for post-graduate students. It encompasses the disciplines of Sport and Exercise Medicine, Biokinetics, Sports Science, Sport and Lifestyle Psychology, Sport and Lifestyle Nutrition, Sports Physiotherapy, Orthopaedics and Radiology.”

The Institute aims to be an “international leader in scientific research that is translated into tangible benefits that will promote well-being in the population through lifestyle interventions, reducing exercise-related injuries and medical complications, and promoting sporting excellence on a platform characterised by world-class education, service delivery, and the use of modern technology”.

SEMLI conducts research into sports injuries and provides interventions to all levels of athletes (from recreational to elite athletes) to mitigate or reduce the chances of possible injuries. It also works on the non-surgical management and rehabilitation of musculoskeletal and other injuries in sports, and on the prevention and management of other medical complications and illness during exercise.

 The Institute is working with international collaborators on a research programme called the **International Million+ Athlete SAFER Project (IMAPS)**, which will collect data on safety during endurance events from more than a million participants in major local and international mass-participation endurance sporting events.

According to Prof Schwellnus, “This research has the potential to significantly impact sports medicine and international guidelines for pre-event and pre-participation screening and return-to-play. It could also have a significant influence on public health guidelines and the clinical approach to safer exercise prescription.”

Another aspect that SEMLI is focusing on is the reduction of the national and international burden of chronic diseases. Prof Schwellnus explained that in South Africa, non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are the most common cause of death in the population. “NCDs are largely preventable, through the adoption of a healthy lifestyle that includes, most importantly, participation in physical activity.” To this end SEMLI’s main aim is to promote a healthy lifestyle for all, including physical activity, and most importantly to ensure that exercise is done safely.

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