

MEDIA RELEASE

University of Pretoria students proves science and rap music rock

PRETORIA – Move over rap/hip-hop stars Jay Z, Drake and Eminem – and make way for University of Pretoria (UP) student Rostum Ogbuehi (Ross the Boss), the star of a music video that promotes vaccination against the COVID-19 virus.

Sans the profanities, this fifth-year Faculty of Health Sciences medical student features in a catchy rap video that dispels myths about getting vaccinated. The video has had at least 25 000 views on YouTube and Instagram, and the idea for it was initiated by the Dean of the Faculty, Professor Tiaan de Jager.

Ogbuehi says that through the faculty's social media crew, Louis Cloete Productions, "the Dean reached out to me to compose a song and a video to aid with the promotion of vaccination".

"I saw the importance of it and decided to go ahead with the project, and I must say, I am pleased with the outcome," Prof De Jager says. "Within less than a week, the video had more than 15 000 hits on social media. It is becoming extremely popular, and we are receiving very positive feedback."

Ogbuehi used information from UP's Acting Head of the Department of Infectious Diseases, Prof Veronica Ueckermann, to craft the lyrics:

Vaccinate x2
It's not too late
Don't procrastinate ...

Hey, everybody, look they call me The Boss
The name's Ross
Giving out information free of cost
Let's talk about the contemplation we're facing of the vaccination
Help, this dying generation
Vaccinate, let us try and heal the nation
Wait, but there's a debate
People are wondering why we should vaccinate
First of all, prevention is better than cure
Second of all, getting the vaccination is not mandatory but it's mandatory for you to know it's your responsibility to keep you, your family and your community safe
So do the right thing and vaccinate

"We have seen a low uptake in people getting vaccinated," Prof De Jager says. "This is concerning, as we know that COVID-19 vaccines reduce the risk of people getting the virus and can reduce the risk of spreading it. We were also one of the first Faculty of Health Sciences to open a vaccination site on campus. I believe it is our duty to serve the UP community [staff and students] and make sure that everybody has easy access to the COVID-19 vaccine."

“I understand the power of rap songs and that it can reach different age groups. I am very proud of our talented students who agreed to compose this unique rap song, and to contribute to the national and international drive to get people vaccinated.”

Other students who feature in the video are Vincent Mathenjwa (medicine), Reatlegile Mangope (oral hygiene) and Tsholofelo Mphahlele (medicine). “The video was shot on Prinshof Campus, at the Basic Medical Sciences building and in the Tswelopele lecture theatre complex,” Ogbuehi says. “The song is based on a Drake-type beat that I had stumbled across on YouTube. I really loved the beat and asked my brother Comrade Junior to remake it, but with some slight alterations to make it unique to me. I would say the song borders on hip-hop and rap, though it has a trap feel to it.”

Ogbuehi says that he believed listeners would connect better with him through a visual representation of the song. “The song alone is good by itself. But the icing on the cake was filming the music video; people need to see who the guy is that’s telling them to be vaccinated. Ultimately, I am trying to aid in the promotion of vaccinating through the University.”

Ogbuehi’s music journey began when he was in Grade 10, when another of his brothers, Dawins, introduced him to the world of hip-hop. “Since then, I’ve been devoted to the game of music,” Ogbuehi says. He explains that this is not his first collaboration with Prof De Jager. “In second year, I approached the Dean with a song that I had written and recorded titled ‘2nd Year’s Guide’. I felt like second year was one of the most difficult years, so I asked the Dean to assist me with promoting the song and video. He was eager and pleased to assist.”

Prof De Jager explains that in its efforts to be innovative and creative, the faculty hosts scientific webinars and has its own HSUP TV on YouTube. A webinar that addressed the use of Ivermectin for the treatment of COVID-19 had more than 17 000 views. As Director of the UP Institute for Sustainable Malaria Control, Prof De Jager’s team won a prestigious science communications award in the National Science and Technology Forum Awards a few years ago.

Caption: Student Rostum Ogbuehi (Ross the Boss)

Link to video: <https://youtu.be/G2QPkpq1Y6w>

Media enquiries:

For interviews with Rostum Ogbuehi (Ross the Boss), please email Prim Gower at Primarashni.gower@up.ac.za or call 083 229 9011.

ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

The University of Pretoria (UP) is one of the largest contact and residential universities in South Africa, with its administration offices located on the Hatfield Campus, Pretoria. This 113-year-old institution is also the largest producer of research in South Africa.

Spread over seven campuses, it has nine faculties and a business school, the Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS). It is the only University in the country with a Faculty of Veterinary Science, which is ranked top in Africa. UP has 120 academic departments and 92 centres and institutes, accommodating more than 55 000 students and offering about 1 100 study programmes.

UP is one of the top five universities in South Africa, according to the 2019-2020 rankings by the Center for World University Rankings. The QS World University Rankings also placed UP among the top 100 universities worldwide in three fields of study (veterinary science, theology and law), and UP is in the top 1% in eight fields of study (agricultural sciences, clinical medicine, engineering, environment/ecology, immunology,

microbiology, plant and animal sciences and social sciences), according to the Web of Science Essential Indicators.

In May 2020, the annual UK Financial Times Executive Education Rankings again ranked GIBS as the top South African and African business school. The University also has an extensive community engagement programme with approximately 33,000 students involved in community upliftment. Furthermore, UP is building considerable capacities and strengths for the Fourth Industrial Revolution by preparing students for the world beyond University and offering work-readiness and entrepreneurship training.

As one of South Africa's research-intensive universities, UP launched the Future Africa Campus in March 2019 as a hub for inter- and transdisciplinary research networks within UP and the global research community to maximise 4IR innovation and address the challenges and stresses our continent and world is facing. In addition, UP also launched the Javett Art Centre in September 2019 as a driver of transdisciplinary research development between the Humanities and other faculties. In November 2020 UP launched Engineering 4.0. as a hub not only for Smart Cities and Transport, but also to link the vast resources in technology and data sciences to other faculties via Future Africa. These initiatives are stimulating new thinking at the frontier of 'science for transformation'.

For more information, go to www.up.ac.za