

MEDIA RELEASE

University of Pretoria Spotlights Inspiring Female Scientists During National Science Week and Women's Month

The University of Pretoria (UP) is proud to commemorate two significant initiatives in South Africa, National Science Week and Women's Month, by showcasing the exceptional contributions of its female scientists in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). This unique confluence of events presents a remarkable opportunity to highlight the University's female scientists who are also STEM educators and researchers.



National Science Week, taking place from 31 July to 4 August, aims to ignite curiosity and foster a passion for STEM fields among learners. Sci-Enza, the oldest science centre in South Africa and managed by Ms Puleng Tsie, an accomplished UP-alumna with a master's degree in Environmental Management, will be at the forefront of this initiative. Sci-Enza offers engaging hands-on learning experiences, interactive exhibits, and science demonstrations that encourage learners towards STEM careers, challenge science stereotypes, and showcase female academic role models.

In her recent inaugural address, Professor Natalie Schellack, Head of the Department of Pharmacology at UP, addressed the critical issue of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and emphasized the importance of antimicrobial stewardship in combating this global health challenge. Professor Schellack's research endeavours to optimize antimicrobial use, reduce unnecessary exposure, and combat the emergence and spread of resistance, particularly in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) facing resource challenges.



Furthermore, Professor Tivani Mashamba-Thompson, Deputy Dean of Research and Postgraduate Studies, envisions a future of democratized healthcare access through REASSURED (Real-time connectivity, Ease of specimen collection, Affordable, Sensitive, Specific, User-friendly, Robust and Equipment free and Delivered to end users) diagnostics. Her research focuses on assessing the accuracy of point-of-care (POC) diagnostic tests, leveraging real-time connectivity and user-friendly, robust, and affordable features. Professor Mashamba-Thompson's work has significant implications for Sub-Saharan Africa, where accurate and accessible diagnostics are crucial.

Dr Rakeshnie Ramoutar-Prieschl, Head of Research Capacity Development at UP and recipient of the prestigious Southern African Research and Innovation Management Association (SARIMA) Excellence Award in 2022, is the driving force behind UP's Women in Science initiative. Dr Ramoutar-Prieschl's interventions, including mentorship programs for early-career academics, empower and elevate women in the field of science. This year's Women in Science event will align with the theme of International Day of Women and Girls in Science: Innovate. Demonstrate. Elevate. Advance. Sustain. (I.D.E.A.S.).





Lastly, Dr Taneshka Kruger, the Project Manager for the [Institute for Sustainable Malaria Control](#), has been leading innovative efforts to educate and communicate vital malaria health messages to the community in the Vhembe district since 2010. Her work focuses on safeguarding communities, especially young children, from this deadly yet preventable disease. Read more about Dr Kruger's work in our [Re.Search magazine](#) (pg 16 – 19).



In a country where skills in mathematics and science are desperately needed, UP nuclear physicist Dr Thabsile Thabethe is making waves by developing young minds through her [books](#) that help babies and toddlers grasp simple mathematical and scientific concepts. "I was inspired to do these books by my two-year-old daughter who really enjoys books when they are being read to her. Kids love learning something new and exciting, especially when it is related to numbers and figures," said Dr Thabethe.

These remarkable female scientists from UP are poised to provide engaging and insightful contributions to conversations and dialogues around National Science Week and Women's Month, owing to their outstanding achievements and diverse backgrounds.

By emphasizing the significance of STEM education in tackling societal challenges, the University of Pretoria aims to inspire the next generation of scientists, engineers, and innovators, paving the way for a brighter and more scientifically-literate future for the nation.

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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 its Hatfield Campus in Pretoria. This 115-year-old institution is also one of the largest producers 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 the best in Africa. UP has 120 academic departments and 92 centres and institutes, accommodating more than 56 000 students and offering about 1 100 study programmes. It has the most academic staff with PhDs (70%), NRF-rated researchers (613).

The 2023 QS World University Rankings by Subject ranked UP first in South Africa in Accounting and Finance, Law, Economics and Econometrics, Mechanical Engineering, Electrical and Electronic Engineering, Chemical Engineering, Mathematics, and Veterinary Science.

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