One of the first things that greeted me upon my return from the United Kingdom, where I had been for a year, was the D43 network meeting in Ethiopia. Principal Investigators from 11 awardees in eight countries, including Prof Petra Brysiewicz, showcased their programmes and accomplishments.

As one reflects on the work done by African countries and universities, the talent in sub-Saharan Africa is obvious, and the future of health research and practice is bright indeed. Africans solving African problems was demonstrated when one of our fellows, Dr Wendy Mphatswe, presented her research outcomes to the other trainees, who likewise shared their experiences.

The highlights of the work accomplished through DRILL over the past two years became obvious at the launch of the Cohort 2 workshop: witnessing Cohort 1 fellows presenting their achievements. However, as Prof Hoosen Coovadia argued, even basic science must be brought to the level of addressing tangible problems facing society, and herein lies the next challenge for DRILL – explicitly addressing real-life problems with science.

Part of the answer to this challenge, and the effort by DRILL to bring about direct relevance of research to healthcare, can be found in the strategic inclusion of five fellows in Cohort 2 employed full-time by the Department of Health (DoH). This is one example of a true intellectual partnership between UKZN and KZN DoH, which was first discussed at a meeting between the two institutions on 23 June 2016 and cemented by a Memorandum of Agreement signed in September 2017. I am hopeful that the current DRILL initiative will represent one of many future joint efforts between the two institutions to address challenges within the health system. The strength of these initiatives is in the use of evidence-based science produced by trained scientists working within the system, with support from the university.

Congratulations Cohort 1 on the progress made thus far, and, on behalf of the DRILL PIs, a warm welcome to our DRILL Cohort 2 fellows, including members of the KZN DoH! Enjoy the festive season, and come prepared for another year of academic success. Happy 2018!

Dr Mosa Moshabela
DRILL Co-PI and leader of the HIV/AIDS Scientific track

Acknowledgments
Fogarty International Center (FIC), NIH Common Fund, Office of Strategic Coordination, Office of the Director (OD/OSC/CF/NIH), Office of AIDS Research, Office of the Director (OAR/NIH), National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH/NIH) of the National Institutes of Health under Award Number D43TW010131.

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Drill Cohort 2 with Principal Investigators at the orientation workshop

EDITORIAL
Dr Sherika Hanley  
MBChB (UKZN); FCFP (SA); MFamMed (UKZN)  
Dr Hanley is a research clinician and specialist in family medicine who works for the Centre for the AIDS Programme of Research in South Africa (CAPRISA) based at UKZN. She has participated as a coinvestigator in multiple clinical trials and in the last year she has taken on the role of principal investigator in three new trials. Her doctoral research study aims to determine the impact of the inclusion of screening for prognostic markers of cardiovascular disease in the routine HIV management plan on modification of risk factors for the prevention of atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease in women of reproductive age.

Mr Thembela Nxumalo  
B. Tech Nursing (Durban University of Technology); Master of Nursing (Research Nursing) (UKZN).  
Mr Nxumalo is a professional nurse in the iLembe Health District: Ndwedwe Community Health Centre, KZN. His role involves the assessment, diagnosis and management of chronic and minor ailments, implementing standards, practices, criteria and indicators for quality nursing and participation in training and research. His doctoral research study aims to provide information and understanding of the conceptions, experiences and understanding of males, females and health care workers regarding voluntary medical male circumcision (VMMC), which will inform the development of a framework to facilitate the uptake of VMMC in KZN.

Mr Alvin J Munsamy  
B. Optom (University of Durban-Westville); Diplomas in Optometry (New England College of Optometry); M. Optom (UKZN)  
Mr Munsamy is an optometrist, a lecturer and a course co-ordinator for the undergraduates in the discipline of Optometry at the School of Health Sciences at UKZN. He teaches and supervises at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. From 2007 to 2013 he was the head of the optometry department at UKZN and has served in numerous leadership roles within the university. He is a research director for the African Vision Research Institute (AVRI) and serves on the board of the Brien Holden Vision Institute (BHVI). His postdoctoral research project aims to integrate telemedicine to strengthen the management of diabetic retinopathy at a primary health care level towards blindness prevention in KwaZulu-Natal.

Dr Khathushelo Percy Mashige  
BSc (Wits); B. Optom (University of Durban-Westville); C.A.S (NECO); M. Optom (UKZN); PhD (UKZN); BSc (Wits)  
Dr Mashige is an optometrist and currently lectures in the discipline of Optometry, School of Health Sciences at UKZN. He lectures and supervises at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

Dr Thiloshini Govender  
MBChB (University of Natal); Diploma in Child Health (College of Medicine of South Africa); FCPH (College of Medicine of South Africa); Postgraduate Diploma in Palliative Care (UCT); Diploma in Occupational Health  
Dr Govender is a Public Health Medicine specialist and runs the Occupational Medicine Service at King Dinuzulu Hospital in KwaZulu-Natal. She provides occupational medicine service for all healthcare workers at King Dinuzulu Hospital including medical surveillance, reporting of occupational injuries and diseases and occupational health policy formulation and review. Her study in DRILL is on palliative medicine and drug-resistant tuberculosis. The aim of the study is to define a package of health-systems-strengthening interventions to promote palliative care at the appropriate level of care.

Dr Shelley Wall  
MBChB (University of Pretoria); Diploma in Primary Emergency Care (College of Medicine of South Africa); MMed (Surgery) (UKZN).  
Dr Wall is a surgeon and runs the Burns Unit at Grey’s Hospital in Pietermaritzburg (KZN). She has been working in the burns unit since 2015 and has decided to focus her career trajectory in the management of burn-injured patients. She qualified with a Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery at the University of Pretoria, South Africa (2007). She completed a diploma in Primary Emergency Care through the College of Medicine of South Africa (2011) and became a Fellow of the College of Surgeons of South Africa (2014). Dr Wall’s doctoral research in DRILL aims to improve pain control in burn-injured children in KwaZulu-Natal.

Dr Velisha Ann Perumal-Pillay  
BScHons; B. Pharm; MMedSci (Pharmaceutical Sciences); PhD (Pharmacy) (UKZN)  
Dr Perumal-Pillay is a registered pharmacist and an academic at the Discipline of Pharmaceutical Sciences, School of Health Sciences, UKZN. She lectures and supervises at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Her field of research is Pharmaceutical Policy Analysis and Access to Medicines with a focus on essential medicines for maternal and child health and those for non-communicable diseases. Her postdoctoral research aims to assess and evaluate the impact of the adoption of the standard treatment guidelines and essential medicines lists on access to, cost, availability and utilisation of essential medicines in South Africa.

Dr Sindiswe Mthembu  
Diploma in Nursing (Lebone College of Nursing); BA Nursing (Nursing Education & Nursing Management) (UNISA); Orthopaedic Nursing (Natal College of Nursing); Masters in Nursing (Education) (University of Natal); PhD (UKZN).  
Dr Mthembu is a professional nurse and the principal at the KZN Nursing College. Her responsibilities include oversight and strategic leadership of the college. Within the College, her roles include facilitating nursing education and training, managing human physical resources, facilitating human resource development and management of the budget and financial matters. Dr Mthembu chairs the College Senate and College Council and all its committees. Her postdoctoral project aims to critically examine contemporary methods and ideologies of nursing leadership within health service delivery, health policy and nursing practices.
FELLOWSHIP KEY TO SUCCESS!

Mental Health

Ms Desiree Govender
B. Physiotherapy (UKZN); MPH (UKZN)

Ms Govender is a physiotherapist. In her role as the Chief Physiotherapist at GJ Crookes Hospital in Scottburgh, KZN she oversees the day to day management of the physiotherapy department. She is a clinical supervisor in the decentralised training programme for physiotherapy undergraduate students. She has gained invaluable experience working with community outreach programmes at GJ Crookes Hospital and is an advocate for the concepts of Primary Health Care, Health Promotion and Universal Health Coverage. Her doctoral study aims to address the problems and needs of parenting adolescent mothers by establishing a healthcare Community of Practice model that will offer a multidisciplinary and comprehensive approach towards their care.

Health Research Ethics

Dr Pamela Pillay
B Med Sci; B Med Sci Hons; M Med Sci (cum laude); UEIP; PhD

Dr Pillay is an early career academic in the Department of Clinical Anatomy. She lectures and supervises research at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. She serves as a council member of the Anatomical Society of Southern Africa. Her postdoctoral research aims to provide an ethical framework that will guide research involving human remains (ie. cadavers; skeletal remains and foetal material) in order to promote research integrity and develop an anatomical research ethics environment in SA.

Mental Health

IN THE WORDS OF DR WENDY MPHATSWE

Just a year after joining the DRILL program, little did I know that I would find myself presenting my research work in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, alongside 27 other emerging researchers from the African continent.

The first annual D43 network meeting was held on 16–17 October 2017 where eleven universities from eight African countries met to showcase their respective research training programs. I presented preliminary data from my PhD project on the human papilloma virus infection in patients with precancerous lesions of the cervix.

Other topics presented were HIV, mental health, genomics, informatics and bioengineering, among others. The diversity and quality of research shared was testimony to the fact that Africans are ready to tackle their own health and health-systems’ challenges through innovation and research. For me, this symbolised a shift in the research agenda in Africa, from one that is reactive and dictated by epidemics such as HIV and TB to one that is proactive and focused on creating a critical mass of world-class scientists who can hold their own even beyond our region.

Of course, none of this would have been possible without the generous funding from the NIH D43 grant, which will train and support an average of 30 fellows from each university; this is an enormous investment towards research-capacity development in Africa. The meeting also created a platform for rich interactions and sharing of experiences among emerging scientists and established researchers. This will go a long way towards forging and facilitating collaborations amongst African universities.

Health Research Ethics

Dr Saul Cobbing (left) and Dr Verusia Chetty (right)

DRILL follows Dr Verusia Chetty and Dr Saul Cobbing, physiotherapists at the Department of Physiotherapy at UKZN, recently acquired academic promotions to associate professor and senior lecturer respectively.

The Developing Research Innovation, Localisation and Leadership in South Africa (DRILL) programme aims to produce world-class scientists who will be able to lead high-impact research to find local culturally-relevant solutions to problems affecting communities in resource-restrained settings in South Africa, particularly KwaZulu-Natal. One of the main objectives of DRILL is to develop the fellows so they are eligible for academic promotions and National Research Foundation (NRF) rating.

Dr Chetty said ‘Professor Suleman, my role as the Chief Physiotherapist at GJ Crookes Hospital in Scottburgh, KZN she oversees the day to day management of the physiotherapy department. She is a clinical supervisor in the decentralised training programme for physiotherapy undergraduate students. She has gained invaluable experience working with community outreach programmes at GJ Crookes Hospital and is an advocate for the concepts of Primary Health Care, Health Promotion and Universal Health Coverage. Her doctoral study aims to address the problems and needs of parenting adolescent mothers by establishing a healthcare Community of Practice model that will offer a multidisciplinary and comprehensive approach towards their care.

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Dr Moses Simuyemba, University of Zambia School of Public Health (left); Dr Flora Katz, Program Director at the Fogarty International Center (FIC) of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) (middle left); Prof Petra Brysiewicz, DRILL Communicating Principal Investigator (middle right) and Prof Fatima Suleman, DRILL Co-Principal Investigator (right) at the AFREhealth 2017 Symposium held in Accra, Ghana.

Dr Mushana: ‘You can’t be a scientist and also be a peasant’...
The second cohort of ten fellows has been welcomed into the Developing Research Innovation, Localisation and Leadership in South Africa (DRILL) programme. The programme is managed under the College of Health Sciences (CHS) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN).

An orientation workshop was held for the incoming cohort of research fellows in order for them to get to know staff, Principal Investigators, Advisory Committee members and some of the fellows from Cohort 1 in addition to understanding of the goals and objectives of the programme. The event took place on 2–3 November, at Coastlands on the Ridge, Durban.

The project secured a significant investment for a five-year period from the Fogarty International Center of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The research training grant funds the training of 20 emerging researchers from UKZN and the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health (KZNDoH), with the aim of producing world-class scientists, creating new knowledge to address local health challenges.

The second cohort of fellows consists of 5 junior UKZN faculty members drawn from various departments of the UKZN College of Health Sciences and 5 fellows from the KZNDoH.

The programme director for the workshop was the DRILL Project Manager, Dr Nisha Nadesan-Reddy, who welcomed the fellows and introduced speakers. Communicating Principal Investigator Professor Petra Brysiewicz congratulated the new fellows for being selected and encouraged them to use the workshop to network with their new colleagues and the many other DRILL role-players who will be supporting them over the next 3 years. The Co-Principal Investigators introduced the five scientific tracks they lead in order to help the fellows understand the scope of the health issues prioritised under DRILL.

Professor Busi Ncama, The Deputy Vice Chancellor of the CHS; Dr Elizabeth Lutge, Manager of Epidemiology, Health Research and Knowledge Management Unit at the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health; members of the DRILL Advisory Committee; the DRILL Principal Investigators and the fellows from the first cohort welcomed the new cohort and stressed the importance of a programme such as DRILL. They advised the new cohort to commit themselves to the training programme to enhance their research knowledge and skills. ‘What really excites me more about DRILL is the relationship between the University and the Department of Health’, said Prof Ncama. Prof Ncama also stated that the DRILL programme has her full support, as it fits with her vision of supporting emerging researchers who have new and fresh research ideas.

The fellows of the first cohort emphasised the importance of fully committing to the programme, and attending the various training sessions that will be scheduled, to fully benefit from the programme. ‘This is a fantastic opportunity, a fantastic personal development, academic and research opportunity, and I encourage you to make the most of it,’ said Dr Diane van Staden, DRILL Fellow.

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