

Alumnus Wins Humanitarian Award

The battle-field surgeon Jonathan Kaplan has become the 7th recipient of the prestigious Robert Burns Humanitarian Award, bestowed in honour of Scotland's 18th Century poet.

Kaplan grew up in South Africa and studied medicine at UCT during the 1970s. After completing his internship he went into exile to avoid serving in the South African Army. Since then he has worked in conflict situations in places as diverse as Angola, Burma, Baghdad and Kurdistan.

Much of Kaplan's work has seen him perform life-saving surgery with limited resources. Accepting the award, he said: "I have worked alongside people of great generosity of spirit and been inspired by many from within and beyond the practice of medicine. I accept this accolade on their behalf, in the hope that it might inspire others".

Kaplan is also the author of two books, *The Dressing Station* (2001) and *Contact Wounds* (2007), in which he gives an honest account of conducting surgery in extreme and primitive conditions.

National Science & Technology Forum (NSTF) Awards are 10 Years Old

The 10th annual NSTF Awards gala dinner was held at Emperor's Palace in Kempton Park recently. Outstanding contributions towards science, engineering and technology were recognised at the event.

The Minister of Science and Technology, Mr Mosibudi Mangena, is the official patron of the NSTF Awards which have, as their motto, "Today's Research, Tomorrow's Innovation". As part of the celebrations, the 72 previous winners of NSTF Awards were again honoured for their ongoing leadership and mentorship.



Minister of Science and Technology, Mr Mosibudi Mangena, Dr Virna Leaner of UCT, and Dr Romila Maharaj of the National Research Foundation.

The Faculty of Health Sciences has had considerable success over the past few years, with previous winners including: Wieland Gevers and Tim Noakes (lifetime achievement); Iqbal Parker (senior black researcher); Tania Douglas and Heidi Segal (young black researchers); and Kit Vaughan (research and its outputs).

This year we had two finalists in Dan Stein (research and its outputs) and Virna Leaner (young black re-

searcher). This was a significant achievement for both of them, with Virna making it all the way to the winner's podium! In her acceptance speech she paid tribute to her family, her PhD mentor and the Faculty, all of whom were represented at the event (sister Joy, mentor Iqbal Parker, and Deputy Dean Kit Vaughan).

Virna Leaner's research addresses the molecular biology underlying the development of cancer, in particular cervical cancer, one of the most common cancers affecting women in developing countries. Using stem cell culture models, Virna and her colleagues have shown that extensive transcriptional changes occur in cells during the process of oncogenesis. These changes are of special interest as they provide clues for potential markers of the disease as well as therapeutic targets.

Prestigious Fellowship

When Dr Molebogeng Rangaka finished her medical degree at UCT, she could have followed any medical speciality, but she chose the highly challenging field of public health and infectious disease.

However, she is confident that she's made the right decision. "Given the scale of the HIV and TB problem in



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DEAN'S CORNER

The past weeks have been witness to some of the darkest days in our recent past, as xenophobia took hold in our poorest communities, resulting in the most abhorrent assaults on human life, human dignity, and human rights. In a province which politicians have declared a "home for all", thousands of displaced people are still without adequate shelter, water and sanitation, and a potential time bomb of serious disease outbreaks is being held at bay by the efforts of the state, with support from a civil society alliance. In this alliance, some of our staff and students, and in particular, SHAWCO, TAC and other bodies with which members of our Faculty community are associated, have been hard at work for the past week. On behalf of the Faculty, I extend

our appreciation to all of those who have rallied in response to the immediate disaster.

There are many challenges inherent in this situation, for there are issues related to the health, social and legal situation of the displaced communities. The larger question of economic scarcity affects all who live in South Africa, which demands longer-term strategies if there is to be a sustainable solution for thousands of South Africans who are still without food security, adequate shelter, water and sanitation.

From our limited experience, we have learnt a few lessons about our capacity to contribute to both the short- and the long-term responses. Firstly, we have the capacity to respond to crisis by working together as a Faculty and University

community of concern. At short notice, students and staff were mobilised, and the good working relationship in the group bodes well for encouraging student participation in other Faculty challenges. Secondly, this was a good case study of the primary health care approach in practice. For not only has the planning been based on evidence derived from site surveys, but there have been strong collaborations between sectors, and between the state and civil society, to ensure effective impact. And most importantly, we need to look anew at how we can reduce poverty and advance equity through our teaching, our research and our service in health. For now, our thoughts are with all those affected by this tragic situation.

Publication of the Month

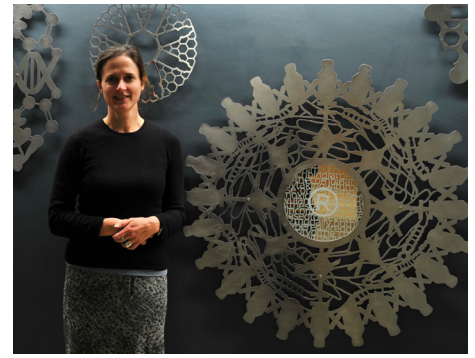
This month's choice is a catalogue by Fritha Langerman, a senior lecturer in the Michaelis School of Fine Art, where she teaches printmaking:

Langerman F (2008) *The Knowledge Chambers, An Exhibition Series*, ISBN 9 780620 408318, Artspace Gallery, Johannesburg.

According to Anna Tietze of UCT's Department of Historical Studies, "This body of work engages with the idea of systems of knowledge, vast compendia of ideas that explain our world. It does so by making reference to three of the

great knowledge systems of history: the rose windows of mediaeval churches, the 18th century *Encyclopédie* edited by French philosopher Denis Diderot, and the modern phenomenon of the Google search engine".

As an extension of this exhibition, the Pharmacology Division of the Department of Medicine commissioned Fritha to produce a body of work at the entrance to their department. Next time you are in the Old GSH, visit the K-floor to experience this extraordinarily uplifting exhibition. It brings another dimension to scholarship!



Sandwich Factory

Every month the School of Public Health and Family Medicine has a departmental tea to celebrate special events such as birthdays, to welcome newcomers, to honour leaving staff and to acknowledge staff achieve-



ments. However, May's departmental tea had a different agenda. In an effort to make a collective contribution to the humanitarian crisis sweeping our country with the attacks on foreigners, staff instead took a knife in hand to create a successful sandwich factory.

[Andrea Rother]

Monthly Quiz

Denis Diderot (1713-1784) was the brightest light of the French Enlightenment—a man of passion and genius. As indicated above, his magnum opus was the *Encyclopédie* to which he contributed 1,000 articles. What are the names of two famous Americans who contributed to this 35-volume work? Send your answers to: kit.vaughan@uct.ac.za.

Answer to last month's quiz: Archbishop Desmond Tutu earned both his bachelor's and master's degrees in theology from King's College, University of London. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1984. Rae Thomas was the winner of the R100 book voucher.

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our society, and the fact that very few medical graduates follow this route, it makes sense that I chose this field", she says.

Rangaka's work received a boost when the Wellcome Trust awarded her a research training fellowship recently. She will do a three-year doctoral course at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, where she obtained her master's degree in epidemiology. In her work, she hopes to evaluate whether new blood-based methods of identifying TB infection that can predict who will develop active TB.

"All of us have the TB germ," she says. "The only available test for tuberculosis infection (Mantoux), as recommended by the government, makes diagnosis very difficult, especially in HIV-infected people".

"It doesn't accurately tell us who is likely to develop active TB and who is likely to benefit from TB preventative therapy. Hopefully, this research may give us something better than we have had thus far".

[Myolisi Gophe]

Centre for Clinical Infectious Diseases Research

The fight against HIV and TB received a boost when the Wellcome Trust recently granted a consortium of researchers, led by Associate Professor Robert Wilkinson, £3-million (R45 million) to establish a Centre for Clinical Infectious Disease Research at UCT.

"The UCT centre will focus on HIV and TB, which are among the main causes of death in Sub-Saharan Africa", says Wilkinson, a Senior Fellow of Clinical Tropical Medicine of the Wellcome Trust, the UK's largest medical research charity, and a member of the Institute of Infectious Disease and Molecular Medicine.

Wilkinson says the situation is dire, with life expectancy falling to below 50 years in a number of African countries, and comments, "Added to the crisis is that remaining in Africa to help combat these problems is not attractive for the few doctors and scientists that the continent produces".

He adds that "We therefore requested an increase in the core support to an existing group of Wellcome Trust and other agency-funded researchers in Southern Africa, to link them more effectively and thereby provide better career prospects for African researchers."

Around 25 entry positions in research will be established to develop the skills of scientists working in

Southern Africa so that they can better compete for their own funding. In addition, the capacity to conduct clinical and laboratory research will be enhanced.

[Monday Paper]

Recognition for Outstanding Student

Marijke Geldenhuys, Quality Assurance and Professional Development Manager at the South African TB Vaccine Initiative (SATVI), received the "Outstanding Health Sciences Student Award", as well as her MSc in Clinical Research Administration at the George Washington University in Washington, DC.

For Marijke, who is married with two young children, the completion of this course within two years while still working full-time, was "the most difficult journey I have ever undertaken, yet absolutely worth the effort. But I would never have been able to do this without the support of my family".

Marijke believes that her studies, funded through a grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH), honed her clinical research skills and equipped her with knowledge and expertise that impacts directly on the type of work that SATVI does.

"My bitter-sweet love affair with George Washington University started a little over two years ago", says Marijke. "I remember as if it were yesterday how close to tears of frustration and trepidation I was when I realized what I was letting myself in for. Things my American classmates took for granted were foreign to me". It is her vision "to improve this situation, and to ignite a groundswell of interest, education and training in clinical research. I am confident that such a programme will be very valuable for the future development of clinical research as a possible career path in South Africa".

