# FACULTYNews

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## Awards for student leadership

**Tende Makofane was awarded the "Most Outstanding Student Leader in an undergraduate Student Faculty Council"**

Tende Makofane

**awarded by the VC, Professor Njabulo Ndebele at the annual Student Leadership Awards. The awards acknowledge students' extra curricular activities in student societies, student councils and residences.**

**Makofane is a 4th year MBChB student.**

## New students' council

**The new Health Sciences Student' Council (HSSC) is now in office after recent elections. The new council members are Vuyani Mhlomi, Reshen Naidoo, Sindy Tu, Yenzi Ngema, Masingita Makhubela, Steven Hohfield, Warren Muller, Bathobile Mdladla, Kgothatso Pilusa, Tinashe Mangoza, Mzwandile Jula and Zainab Vaggie.**

**Harold Varmus (centre) with Tinashe Mutsvangwa (left) who is working on diagnosing fetal alcohol syndrome in infants, while Rathabile Khutlang (right) is working on automated diagnosis of TB from sputum smears.**

## Visit by Harold Varmus

The Faculty was privileged to host a visit by Harold Varmus, the CEO of Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York. Varmus, who won the Nobel Prize in 1989 for discovering the cellular origin of retroviral oncogenes, was the Director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) from 1993-2000, during which time its budget grew by more than 50%. After stepping down from the NIH when George Bush became President, he led the effort to establish the Public Library of Science (PLoS), an initiative to promote open access journals.

While on our campus he toured the facilities of the IIDMM with Professor Ed Sturrock and, among others, he met Dr Denver Hendricks and some of his students. Hendricks worked at the NIH while Varmus was the Director but they never had the opportunity at that time to speak to one another. Varmus also visited the MRC/UCT Medical Imaging Research Unit where he spoke to Dr Tania Douglas and her students (see photograph), whose research involves the diagnosis of fetal alcohol syndrome, tuberculosis and breast cancer. Each time he chatted to the students he asked if they made use of open access journals and whether they intended to publish their work in these journals.

## UCT Fellows' Awards

This is the third year we have had the UCT Fellows' Award, which "rewards younger staff for exceptional achievement". Eligible candidates are permanent members of the academic staff, younger than 40 years of age and in full-time employment at UCT for less than 5 years. Six young academics were recognised this year, and two are from our Faculty.

Dr Virna Leaner is a Senior Lecturer in Medical Biochemistry who, during her postdoctoral fellowship, spent time at the NIH where she became interested in transcription factors and their role in cancer. Her work on the role of activator protein-1 transcription factor in the process of cellular transformation has shown that over-expression of this protein caused extensive changes in cells during oncogenesis. Leaner and her colleagues discovered a number of genes that could potentially serve as markers and therapeutic targets for cancer.

Dr Sandrine Lecour has pursued a hypothesis that the heart has its own immune system which, if correctly stimulated, is able to protect the heart from onslaughts such as severe lack of blood flow, as occurs during a heart attack. Through her major publication in *Circulation*, she has demonstrated the existence of a novel protective pathway that involves the immune system in ischaemic heart disease and that can be augmented to increase the resistance of the heart to a model heart attack.

## DEAN'S CORNER

In October, the Health Professions Council of South Africa visited our Faculty to make a final assessment towards accreditation of the MBChB curriculum introduced in 2002. Following two earlier visits since 2003, the team accredited the programme for a further five years and commended the Faculty for its achievements.

As is the experience for most pioneers, the path to this accreditation has not always been easy, with uncharted territory presenting unanticipated obstacles at every turn. In the face of these challenges, the strength of progress in implementing the curriculum lay in three spheres: the values underpinning change; the protagonists and implementers; and the students.

Curriculum transformation started more than a decade ago, and – based on the philosophy of primary health care – the major driver is relevant now as it was then: to ensure that our graduate profile is aligned with the requirements of the health sector, and in reaching that aim, to prepare our students to be thinking, questioning, caring and effective health workers.

To design a curriculum that meets all these lofty goals and then to implement it has required innovation, hard work, persuasive competencies, thick skin in the face of criticism and most of all, commitment to the fundamental purpose of change. The design and implementation teams embodied all these capacities and much, much more. And to all of those who have made the curriculum a living success, leading to its accreditation, I extend the Faculty's sincere appreciation. While your hard work has been worthwhile in achieving this intermediate goal, your efforts will bear more fruit in the coming years, when the graduates get into practice.

But when all is said and done, the students are the real success of the curriculum, for not only have they weathered the often stormy course with the Faculty, but they have themselves become ardent advocates for this new way of learning about health and health care. As the first "products" come to the end of the first cycle of the curriculum, the Faculty commends them for their perseverance. We wish them well not only for the examinations, but also for success in their careers which lie ahead.

Like our rugby team, they are the real 2007 winners!

## Publication of the Month

During the six-monthly UCT Research Indaba held at the beginning of October, a relatively new measure of research impact, the h-index, was discussed. But, just what is the h-index? It is an index that quantifies both the scientific productivity and the scientific impact of a scientist. Simply stated, a person with an h-index of N has published N papers, *each of which* has at least N citations. So, who holds the record for the highest h-factor in our Faculty and what is their most highly cited paper? The answer is Professor Lionel Opie who has an h-index of 66. Yes, every one of those 66 papers has had at least 66 citations, and the most highly cited is:

Opie LH, "Reperfusion injury and its pharmacologic modification", *Circulation,* 80(4): 1049-1062, 1989 which has received 406 citations. For those of you wishing to check your own (or someone else's!) h-index, this can be done by visiting the ISI website at: http://portal.isiknowledge.com/ and then select Web of Science, followed by General Search. Enter the author's name and initials and finally click on the Citation Report button. For purposes of comparison, Harold Varmus (see story on page 1) has an h-index of 113 which is really quite extraordinary.

## Award for young health scientists

**Final year Communication Sciences and Disorders students won first prize in the community-based category of the Pfizer/University of KwaZulu-Natal National Young Health Scientists Research symposium for their project: "Eish me ek verstaan niks nie": Learners' perceptions of communication in linguistically complex classrooms.**

**The R5 000 prize was awarded to Orla Kirk, Letisha Maharaj, Siyanda Moifo, Veena Naran, Bianca Salamon and Lisa Williams. The project forms part of an NRF-funded project: Enhancing communication in classrooms. The principal researcher was Associate Professor Harsha Kathard and their supervisor was Dr Michelle Pascoe.**

## Monthly Quiz

**Leonardo da Vinci is widely recognised for his contributions to anatomy and, in particular, for his detailed drawings. While Andrea del Verrochio is credited with kindling Leonardo's interest in the human form, who is generally acknowledged to have taught him anatomy and given him an opportunity to dissect cadavers in the medical school at Pavia? Send your answers to: kit.vaughan@uct.ac.za.**

**Answer to last month's quiz: the winger for the American Eagles who left Bryan Habana in his wake is Takudzwa Ngwenya (originally from Zimbabwe) who is a radiology registrar. Dhiren Govender was the winner (he beat Pete Meissner by one minute) and a record total of 17 correct answers were received.**

## Marinus van den Ende: 50th Anniversary Commemoration

The Faculty will be hosting a lecture by Dr Jan van den Ende entitled "Malaria Control in South Africa: Progress in Recent Years" in memory of his late father Professor Marinus van den Ende.

Dr Jan van den Ende, a retired pathologist, is a graduate of UCT. He was director of the South African Institute of Medical Research (SAIMR) from 1990 to 1995. He was also chairman of the Malaria Advisory Group to the National Department of Health.

Professor Marinus van den Ende was also a UCT medical graduate who established a department of virology and bacteriology, with an emphasis on research. The South African Council for Scientific and Industrial Research established a virus research unit under his leadership in 1950. He became widely recognised as an authority and in 1954 was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society. He was appointed Dean of the Faculty of Medicine and died at the age of 45 in 1957.

**Date**: 6 November 2007
**Time**: 12h30 to 14h00
**Venue**: Wolfson Lecture Theatre, IIDMM

## Registrar graduates with Fellowship in Occupational Medicine

Dr Shahieda Adams, registrar in the Occupational Medicine Training programme is the first occupational medicine specialist to be awarded with the Fellowship in Occupational Medicine from the Colleges of Public Health Medicine (FCPHM) since this new speciality was introduced in South Africa.

This four-year training programme includes both public health/preventative as well as clinical attachments supervised by consultant specialists from the School of Public Health and Family Medicine and the Department of Medicine, says Associate Professor Mohamed Jeebhay, convenor of the programme.

The programme has been benchmarked against international norms due to its links with the European Association of Schools of Occupational Medicine (EASOM) and the Occupational Medicine section of the Union of European Medical Specialists (UEMS).

Adams was awarded a distinction for her MMed thesis, which focused on the "Predictors of obstructive lung disease among seafood workers along the West Coast of the Western Cape".

The study reported prevalence of 5-11% for extrinsic asthma and 3-5% for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) among this group of working adults. A

**Dr Shahieda Adams**

strong link was evident between previous respiratory diseases, such as TB and childhood chest infections, and the presence of obstructive lung disease manifesting as either asthma or COPD. Workplace exposures, particularly peak exposure to dust and vapours, as well as sensitisation to indoor inhalant allergens were added risk factors. Interestingly, the study also highlighted that high serum levels of omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids (derived from seafood in the diet) appeared to be protective for adult asthma.

## Raymond Abratt appointed to world association

**Raymond Abratt**

University staff continue to make an impact in international academic fora. Professor Raymond Abratt, Head of Radiation Oncology in the Faculty has been elected Chair of the nominating committee for the Board of Directors of the International Association for the Study of Lung Cancer (IASLC) at a recent World Congress on Lung Cancer in Seoul which attracted 5 000 delegates. Lung cancer is the most common cancer world wide.

The IASLC is a large multinational and multidisciplinary organisation, with headquarters in the US and hosts its congress every 2 years. Its President is Japanese and the Executive Director is American.

The AISLC publishers an accredited Journal — the *Journal of Thoracic Oncology* of which Abratt is the Associate Editor.

## Matter of fact

The October edition of Faculty News said that Hamilton Naki "assisted Dr Christiaan Barnard to conduct the world's first heart transplant". Naki worked in the animal unit and he was not directly involved in the heart transplant. We regret the error.