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PRESS STATEMENT

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Prestigious new Wellcome Centre for Infectious Diseases Research in Africa for UCT

7 December 2016, University of Cape Town, South Africa - A Wellcome Centre for Infectious Diseases Research in Africa (CIDRI-Africa) will be established at the University of Cape Town to augment acknowledged strengths in the basic and clinical aspects of infectious diseases research in the Faculty of Health Sciences.

The Wellcome Trust today announced funding of £118M to 14 major research centres over the next five years, of which CIDRI-Africa will receive R85 million approximately. This prestigious award is the only one given to an organisation outside of the United Kingdom.

Wellcome Centres all aim to advance understanding of health and disease, and span fundamental and social sciences, clinical research and engineering. At Wellcome Centres groups of world-class researchers with a joint vision come together to share facilities, collaborate, and benefit from the dynamic research, cultural and training environment. CIDRI-Africa, based in the prestigious Institute of Infectious Disease and Molecular Medicine (IDM) at UCT's Faculty of Health Sciences, will be headed by leading UCT researcher Honorary Professor Robert J Wilkinson. It will collaborate with partners locally, in Africa and from the UK to deliver world-leading research and high-impact translation.

One of seven newly-established Wellcome Centres, CIDRI-Africa will focus on Infectious Diseases. The burden of infectious disease in South Africa and on the continent is extreme with an estimated 25.5 million of the 36.7 million people living globally with HIV in sub-Saharan Africa. As a consequence 75% of the world's cases of HIV associated TB also occur on the continent. As well as testing vaccines and drugs in communities most affected by the disease, capacity

and capability to research the basic science of such diseases and to carry out intensive earlier phase experimental medicine studies is also crucial to the enterprise and to innovation.

Wellcome's Director Dr Jeremy Farrar said:

"Wellcome Centres play a special role in the global research ecosystem. By creating places where researchers can flourish we can catalyse world-leading research and translation, and amplify its influence and impact.

"At Wellcome we believe in long term support for discovery-driven science, and Wellcome Centres are an outstanding environment for researchers to further our understanding of fundamental biology, accelerate translation to clinical practice, and explore the social and cultural context of medicine."

Director of CIDRI-Africa, Professor Robert Wilkinson is rightly proud of this immense achievement, not only for UCT, but for the continent: "This award is one I hope all can share at UCT. We competed against world-class UK institutions. The process was arduous – the co-applicants', Faculty and University support made this possible. The basis for the funding is that, in this area of research, UCT is amongst the best in the world. No similar award has been made outside the UK."

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About Cidri (now CIDRI- Africa)

The centre is based at the University of Cape Town and aims to combat infectious diseases related to poverty, with a particular focus on TB and HIV. [CIDRI](#) has been running since 2008, and this new funding to make it a Wellcome Centre will allow it to evolve further.

About The Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Cape Town

Founded in 1829, the University of Cape Town (UCT) has a proud tradition of academic excellence and effecting social change and development through its pioneering scholarship, faculty and students.

The Faculty of Health Sciences' research enterprise is dynamic and fast growing. It aims to advance and encourage excellent research, in the context of the vision and mission of the Faculty and of the University of Cape Town. We lead high-quality research programmes, train future research leaders, and provide advice and counsel to health organisations around the world. Our publications output is the highest at UCT. We promote interdisciplinary research across the Faculty's 13 departments through our 34 research groupings.

About Wellcome

[Wellcome](#) exists to improve health for everyone by helping great ideas to thrive. We're a global charitable foundation, both politically and financially independent. We support scientists and researchers, take on big problems, fuel imaginations and spark debate.