

Empilisweni Centre for Women's Health

Fellowship (MPH Bursaries)

The Empilisweni Centre for Women's Health is a five-year NIH-funded award (2023-2028) focussed on advancing the understanding of effective and feasible strategies to support the delivery and uptake of effective cervical cancer screening integrated into primary care clinics in Cape Town. Cervical cancer was the most diagnosed cancer in 23 countries and the leading cause of cancer-related deaths among women in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). Cervical cancer is almost entirely preventable through screening and treatment as part of secondary prevention. In 2020, The World Health Organization (WHO) set 2030 targets, including 70% of women screened with a high-performance test by age 35 and again by age 45, and 90% of women identified with cervical disease (precancer or invasive) receive treatment and care. In South Africa, only 36% of women have ever had a cervical cancer screening test, meeting merely half of the global elimination goal for screening. Data are lacking on the proportion of South African women linked to follow-up colposcopy and treatment, but coverage is estimated to be low. One approach pioneered by researchers leading the Empilisweni Centre is screening for Human papillomavirus (HPV) followed by treatment of precancerous lesions, an approach called 'screen and treat.'

This multidisciplinary team included public sector health services in the Western Cape (Western Cape Department of Health & Wellness – WCDH&W), and researchers from the University of Cape Town (UCT), and Columbia University Irving Medical Center (CUIMC) are working together to support South Africa's cervical cancer elimination goals through the utilization of implementation science to develop and disseminate findings on strategies to increase coverage of evidence-based cervical cancer prevention equitably. The team has expertise in cancer prevention/control, implementation science, epidemiology and public health.

Empilisweni Centre also aims to strengthen capacity in clinical services and implementation science in South Africa through training and mentoring emerging researchers focussed on cancer prevention and control. The Centre will offer up to two scholarships to support new or enrolled students in the Masters In Public Health (MPH) programme at University of Cape Town. We seek a highly motivated student with public health interests in either cancer control, health systems research, health economics, epidemiology, socio-behavioural and implementation science, to join our interdisciplinary research group. The candidate should have expressed interest in public sector service, health service or implementation research, or related areas.

The successful applicant will receive a scholarship with financial support to complete their Master of Public Health (MPH). Together with the MPH primary supervisor the successful applicant will have a mentoring team with primary co-mentors at UCT mentor, WCDH&W, and CUIMC. In coordination with their mentor, they will co-develop their learning plan and scope of work for applied experience in the WCDH&W. The student will participate in project-specific

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activities that contribute to the design, implementation, evaluation, reporting, and dissemination of the Centre's findings.

Conditions of Award:

The successful candidate will:

- Be enrolled as an MPH student at the University of Cape Town in the 2024 / 2025 academic year.
- Not hold fulltime employment
- Complete the Cancer Prevention and Control MPH module and other relevant public health modules, depending on the chosen MPH track.
- Complete a practicum at the WCDH&W for 120 notional hours. The practicum can be completed in either Semester 1 or Semester 2. The successful applicant will develop the practicum scope and timeline with their MPH supervisor and mentoring team.
- Undertake dissertation-related research activities focused on equitably advancing cervical cancer prevention and control in resource-constrained settings, including South Africa. Focal areas may involve community engagement, public health, clinical and/or laboratory settings. This research may include systematic reviews, quantitative and/or qualitative data collection, overseeing data collection, data management, data quality assurance/control reviews, and conducting statistical and qualitative data analyses.
- Contribute to scientific publications for peer-review, or stakeholder reports.
- As part of the candidate's professional development, the participant will be required to actively engage in the Empilisweni Women's Health Centre activities and the relevant implementation science trainings at UCT and Columbia University Irving Medical Center, including webinars, and other planned workshops.
- Enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with their UCT supervisor and adhere to the agreed-upon plans and arrangements therein.
- Comply with UCT's approved policies, procedures and practices for postgraduate students.
- Be required to finalize both the dissertation topic and primary supervisor by early December 2024, for 2025 min-dissertation registration.

Value and tenure:

The value of the scholarship will be a total amount of R 254 000 per annum.

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Academic Criteria:

Eligible candidates will:

- Be a currently enrolled or newly enrolling MPH student, registering for studies in 2024 or 2025, and in any of the following tracks; Epidemiology and Biostatistics, Socio-behavioural, Health systems or Health Economics track.
- Have excellent English written and communication skills, as well as strong analytic and research skills.

Advantageous:

- Current or previous work experience or training in the field of cancer prevention and control in the public sector.
- Familiarity with women's health.
- Experience working with a diverse team of clinicians in obstetrics / gynaecology, oncology, epidemiologists, implementation scientists, policy, economics and biostatistics.
- Interest in working in the public sector or doing health service / health systems or implementation science.

Application requirements:

Please email the following in a single pdf file to: shameem.bray@uct.ac.za

- A CV including a full list of publications (if any)
- An application letter describing candidate's academic and research interests, relevant research and work experiences, academic/professional goals, and objectives, confirmed mentor, and how his/her research interests align with those of the Empilisweni Centre for Women's Health Project.
- Certified copies of relevant academic transcripts and degree certificates.
- At least two letters of recommendation from academic and/or professional referees.

Selection Process:

Eligible and complete applications will be considered by a Empilisweni Centre Women's Health Scholarship Selection Team. Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted.

Application deadline: will open in May 2024, applications will be accepted on a rolling basis until the scholarship positions are filled.

Contact details for submission of applications and for enquiries:

Queries can be directed to: : shameem.bray@uct.ac.za

The University of Cape Town is committed to the pursuit of excellence, diversity and redress in achieving its equity targets. It reserves the right to disqualify ineligible, incomplete and or inappropriate applications, and reserves the right to change the conditions of award or to make no awards at all.