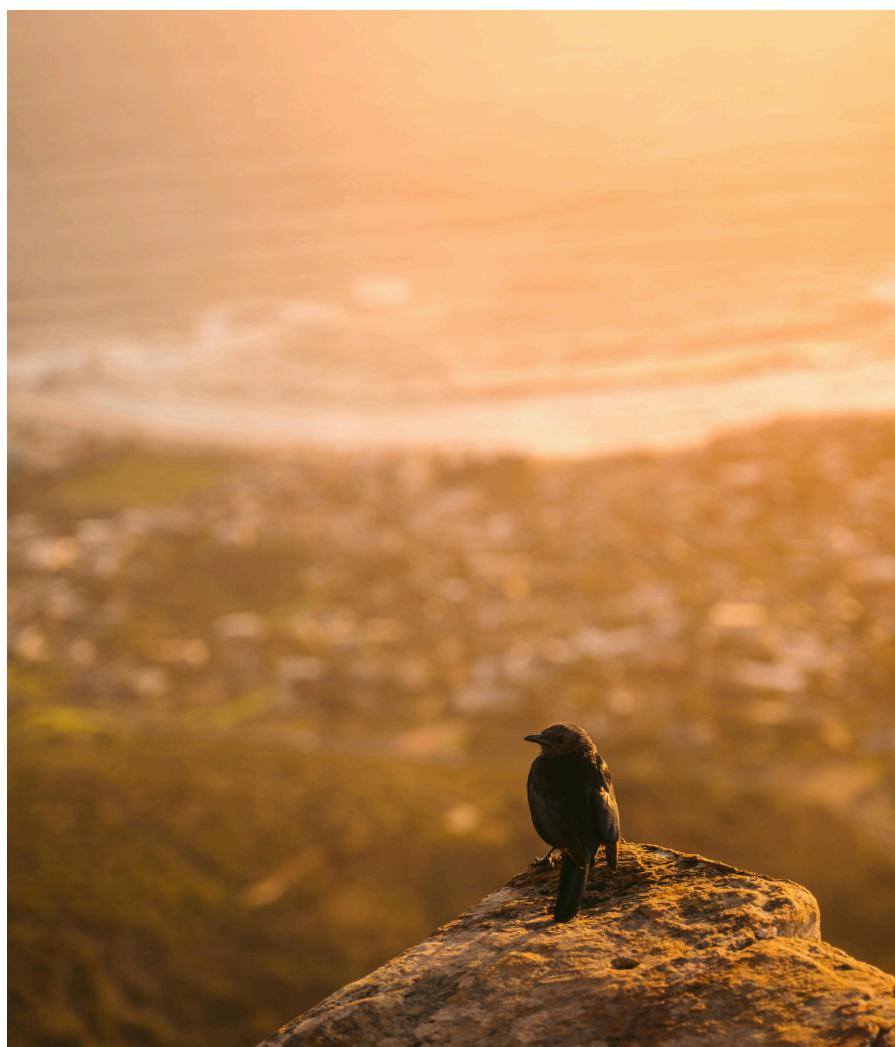


Haematology News

The official Newsletter of Haematology, UCT



Welcome to the biannual newsletter for Haematology at the University of Cape Town.

This newsletter seeks to share the latest on local haematology-related news, activities, and achievements in the Departments of Pathology and Medicine.

Newsletter Highlights

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Spotlight on: Division of Haematology Transformation and Equity Committee

Committed since 2022 to building an equal, diverse & inclusive environment.

By Marian Stone

The Haem-TEC continues to serve as a platform for unity and inclusion within the division, supporting initiatives that celebrate diversity and encourage collaboration. Recent highlights include Heritage Day celebrations, which honour the unique backgrounds of staff and students and reinforce the value of difference.

The committee also participated in the Honours Mentorship Programme, offering guidance to first-year postgraduate students at UCT, and hosted the founder of Heroes Academy in 2022 to spotlight the role of men in combating Gender-Based Violence in South Africa.

Empowering youth through education remains a central focus. In 2024, Haem-TEC members joined a Health Sciences Faculty initiative to tutor Grade 8 learners at Usasazo High School in Khayelitsha in Mathematics, Natural Sciences, and English – supporting learners facing socioeconomic challenges.

The committee further assisted with Grade 11 Open Days, showcasing the Haematology Laboratory to inspire interest in scientific careers, and promoted the Division's work at the Blood Rush event, held in collaboration with the African Research Society.



Division of Haematology

University of Cape Town
Transformation and Equity Committee

Haem-TEC's impact extends beyond UCT, with meaningful initiatives in the wider community. Through the division's generosity, several charitable drives were conducted – including donations of blankets and essential toiletries to AGS Sarepta Old Age Home. In 2024, the committee partnered with Obs Can Feed You, a community kitchen in Observatory, providing multiple donations of fresh and non-perishable food items.

This year also marked a milestone with the launch of Haem-TEC's first official logo, a collaborative design reflecting its values and vision. Another highlight was the interactive "Bridge the Gap" Game Show, which fostered open communication between staff and students.

The year concludes with a Dezemba cupcake drive for recipients at Obs Pasta Kitchen, further promoting connection and care.

These efforts showcase the committee's ongoing commitment to upliftment, solidarity, and equity – both within the Division and beyond the University.

“What an amazing year it has been for our small team with big dreams! Reflecting on the past year, it is remarkable to see what a positive impact the passion of a few individuals can have on the Division and the community. I would like to thank each of the committee members for their enthusiasm, dedication and partnership, as well as everyone who has supported the Haem-TEC in any way. I look forward to the new year, where Haem-TEC will continue to transform, inspire, and uplift.”

-Marian Stone (Chair)

Cupcake Drive with Obs Pasta Kitchen



Division of Haematology
University of Cape Town
Transformation and Equity Committee



In November 2025, the Haematology Transformation and Equity Committee (TEC) held a cupcake drive in partnership with Obs Pasta Kitchen. Generous donations were received from the staff and students in Haematology. Our heartfelt gratitude to those who donated.



Haematology would like to acknowledge and thank the TEC team members:
Marian Stone (Chair), Thando Kubekha (Vice-chair), Mogamat Zhaheed Smith,
Jolene Brooks, Dr. Athenkosi Kema and A/Prof. Shaheen Mowla.

Recent events

Haematology would like to welcome to the team:

- Haematopathology supernumerary registrar from Lesotho, Dr. Moipone Nthimo (photograph right)
- Clinical Haematology Fellow, Dr. Nokubonga Vundla (photograph below)
- Research Medical Officer, Dr. Elizabeth “Jo” Hughes

Welcome



Baby steps

We are delighted to share the joyful news of the arrival of baby Tsakani Baloyi, her beautiful name meaning “rejoice”. Our heartfelt congratulations to Siphiwe, Phethego and their family on this precious new addition.

We join them in celebrating this wonderful milestone and are grateful that both mom and baby are doing well.

Wedding bells

Join us in congratulating Fiona and Calum on their wedding, as they celebrate this special milestone together.

We wish them a beautiful wedding day and a lifetime filled with love, joy and shared adventures.





HHT Horizons 2025 Conference

South Africa's first Hereditary Haemorrhagic Telangiectasia (HHT) conference, organised by Prof Estelle Verburgh, Dr Nicolé Smith and Dr Gerdien Kritzinger from BLOODSA took place on Friday, 19 September at the Century City Conference Centre in Cape Town. Funded by Acino and BLOODSA, five international HHT experts shared insights and advice into diagnosis and treatment of HHT to an audience of 80 healthcare practitioners and HHT patients. The recording and slides are available on the BLOODSA website (link below).



<https://bloodsa.org.za/hht-horizons-2025-collaboration-for-innovative-care-in-south-africa/>



PathReD Johannesburg 2025: A Resounding Success

PathReD Johannesburg, held in October 2025, was a great success with excellent representation and high-quality presentations from academic institutions across South Africa. The program featured outstanding talks from both international and local invited speakers. A/Prof. Jessica Opie contributed significantly to the meeting, serving on the PathReD Scientific Organising Committee and acting as Co-Chair of the Discipline Advisory Committee for Haematology.

Haematology Program Highlights

Day 1 Workshops

- Morphology: Bridging the clinic-to-microscope gap
- Haemolytics: Connecting globin, enzyme and membrane defects

Days 1–3 Scientific Sessions

- Haematology and Artificial Intelligence
- Haematological Malignancy: Bridging the phenotype–genotype gap
- Haemostasis and Obstetrics
- Haematology and HIV

Each session featured two invited speakers and oral abstract presentations, sparking energetic, collaborative discussions. The congress was both inspiring and impactful, offering excellent networking opportunities supported by a vibrant and enjoyable social program.

We extend our sincere thanks to the Discipline Advisory Committee for their hard work in reviewing abstracts and posters, and to all presenters for their exceptional contributions (see under Conference Presentations).



Photograph (Left to right): Dr. Daleen Kriel, Dr. Marcel du Toit, Dr. Edward Koen, Dr. Rory Shein, A/Prof Jessica Opie, Ms. Marian Stone, Dr. Kingsley Lohlun and Dr. Athenkosi Kema.

National Teaching initiatives: 2025 review



Haematology Deep Dive is a national online teaching platform featuring expert speakers from South Africa and abroad. Now in its fourth year, it continues to deliver high-quality training to clinicians and trainees in Haematology. In 2025 alone, the program included 36 sessions, with 2 focused on ethics and 14 supported through sponsorship (sponsors listed below).



BMT Classroom is now in its third year of supporting excellence in bone marrow transplant training. The program delivered 24 sessions this year, featuring international guest speakers, including representatives from AfBMT and EBMT. A major milestone has been the launch of the BMT Nurses Training platform and working group, led by Dr. Justin du Toit, Dr. Candice Hendricks and Sr. Cyril Mthimkulu in collaboration with EBMT, with 7 dedicated training sessions held to date. The sponsors are listed below.



Through our NIH Fogarty grant, Blood Research and Enhanced Training against HIV-South Africa (BREATH-SA), we hosted a hybrid and in-person “Introduction to data analysis and clinical research” course from 11 November - 6 December in Cape Town. Attendees included candidates from UCT, UFS and SANBS. Photographs below shows this years’ participants and instructors.



Toy Collection for RCWMH Festive Parade – 10 December ‘25



In the spirit of the season, staff generously donated toys and individual holiday boxes for the Red Cross Children’s War Memorial Hospital Festive Parade on the 10th of December. These gifts will bring joy to both inpatients and outpatients as they celebrate during the parade.

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who contributed to making the day special for the children!

The photograph on the left shows the RCWMH team (from left to right: Marlon Prins, Zulfa Abrahams, Haniyah Hendricks, Miriam Brown, Abenathi Ndzekeni, Bianca Sounth, Malishca Perumal and Tanja Zbodulja).



UCT Hosts Final NHLS Project ECHO Block for 2025

UCT had the pleasure of hosting the NHLS Project Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes (ECHO) for the final quarter of 2025. This innovative remote training platform provides access to high-quality education, enabling knowledge sharing and comprehensive skills development among laboratory medicine professionals nationwide. The program featured a diverse and dynamic line-up of biostatisticians, scientists, technologists, and pathologists from UCT, together with guest scientists from the University of the Free State (UFS) and Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT).

The presentations offered a journey from foundational skills in research design and data analysis to advanced molecular insights spanning HIV-associated lymphoma, microRNA applications, natural killer cell biology, FISH testing, and extracellular vesicles. The full list of topics and presenters is included below.

- How to Write a Research Protocol: The Basics by Dr Daleen Kriel (UCT).
- Introduction to variables and data analysis by Karryn Brown &Jenna Bailey (UCT).
- Molecular Insights into HIV-Associated Lymphoma - MicroRNA as a Diagnostic and Prognostic Tool by A/Prof. Shaheen Mowla (UCT).
- The status of programmed death ligand 1 in HIV-associated Diffuse large B cell Lymphoma by Dr. Aaliyah Saferdien (UCT).
- Natural Killer Cells in Haematology: Clinical Significance and Laboratory Analysis by Prof Glenda Davison (CPUT).
- Small Molecules, Big Impact: How microRNAs may redefine early detection and risk stratification, as well as patient outcomes for NCDs in Africa by Dr. Don Matshazi (CPUT).
- The Science behind the signals. A guide to establishing or improving your haematology FISH testing by Daphne Taylor (NHLs).
- Research within the NHLS – anyone can! by A/Prof Karen Shires (UCT).
- The role of extracellular vesicles in thrombosis and haemostasis by Prof Muriel Meiring (UFS).

Our sincere thanks go to all presenters and chairs for delivering an engaging, informative, and well-attended teaching block. A special thanks is also extended to Dr. Jenique Baily and Ms. Marian Stone for their coordination of the program and speakers.

Farewells

We are very sad to bid farewell to Dr. Jenique Bailly who joined UCT NHLS as a newly qualified Haematology pathologist from WITS in 2019. She has grown from strength to strength and is currently a Senior Pathologist and consultant in charge of the NHLS Haematology Laboratory. She has made a huge and lasting contribution to our registrar teaching, laboratory management and research.

Jenique has been an invaluable member of our team, bringing not only her expertise and dedication but also her warmth, knowledge, and support to everyone around her. We applaud her incredible drive, enthusiasm and diligence and wish her everything of the best as she embarks on her subspecialisation in Clinical Haematology and we hope that this next journey brings her fulfillment, success, and plenty of joy. She will be sorely missed as a colleague, mentor and friend.

The photograph on the right shows Dr Jenique Bailly (front left) with some of her colleagues: A/Prof. Jessica Opie (back left), Dr Kingsley Lohlun (back right), and Dr Lauren Lemkus (front right), at a farewell lunch held at La Cuccina at the Baxter.



Conference presentations



Haemoglobinopathies in the public health sector of the Western and Eastern Cape Provinces of South Africa: A Retrospective Analysis. du Toit M, Kriel M, Opie J, Bailly J. Oral presentation.

Effects of sample handling on the detection of key molecular markers in myeloid neoplasms. Parker V, Kriel M, Stone M, Shires K. Oral presentation.

The utility of the day 14 bone marrow biopsy in AML - The Groote Schuur experience. Shein R, Brown K, Bailey J, Verburgh E, Opie J. Oral presentation.

Systemic mastocytosis in paediatric acute myeloid leukaemia with RUNX1: RUNX1T1 fusion. Smith N, Lemkus L, de Quintal H, Opie J & Bailly J. Oral presentation.

The clinical and diagnostic utility of NGS in AML and myeloid malignancies: a South African perspective. Lohlun K, Bailly J, Nell E-M, Verburgh E, Shires K, Hodgkinson K, Opie J. Oral presentation.

Thrombocytopenia in Pregnancy. Kriel M. Invited speaker.

SA rare myeloid neoplasm with eosinophilia and two PDGFRA fusion genes. Richardson D, Bailly J, Jacobs R, Baloyi S, Opie J. Oral presentation.

Analysis of coombs positive autoimmune haemolytic anaemia in an HIV endemic hospital population. De John K, Verburgh E, Brown K, Bailey J, Opie J. Oral presentation.

HIV-associated multiple myeloma: clinicopathological characteristics, early treatment response and survival rates in the era of antiretroviral therapy. Kema A, Bailly J, Opie J, Verburgh E, Kriel M. Oral presentation.

Conference presentations



Point-of-care core needle biopsy for lymphadenopathy: A cost-effective, scalable pathway to early diagnosis in tuberculosis and HIV-endemic settings. Richardson D, Fareed-Brey W, Antel K, Brown K, Bailey J, Verburgh E, Cunnamma L. Oral presentation.

AML with inv(16) and concurrent BCOR/SF3B1 mutations: Challenging the boundaries of risk stratification. De John K, Dicks T, Officer S. Poster presentation.

Circulating natural killer cells in HIV-associated Hodgkin lymphoma. Isaacs J, Bailey J, Verburgh E, Mohamed Z, Chetty D, Davison G and Opie J. Poster presentation. (Third poster prize).

MicroRNA 181b as a biomarker of early detection and prognosis in HIV-associated aggressive B cell lymphoma. Kubheka T, Alves de Souza Rios L, Sinkala M, Mowla S. Poster presentation.

The impact of the B cell lymphoma factor Activation Induced Cytidine Deaminase on epigenetic plasticity. Makofane L, Ramorola B, Kruse E, Alves de Souza Rios L, Willmer T, Mowla S. Poster presentation. (Prize for best poster).



Photograph: Thando Kubheka (left) and Lincoln Makofane (right) at the 17th Annual Haematology Oncology Symposium

Conference presentations



Dr Aaliyah Saferdien (postdoctoral fellow), Thando Kubheka (PhD candidate), and Babalwa Yekelo (PhD candidate), attended and presented at the AORTIC 2025 International Cancer Conference: 2-5 November 2025, Hammamet, Tunisia. Thando presented a 3-minutes lightning talk while Aaliyah and Babalwa presented posters.



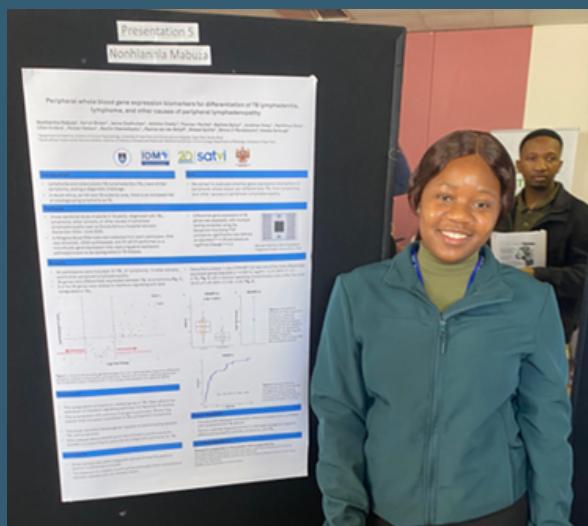
Photograph above: Babalwa Yekelo (left), Dr. Aaliyah Saferdien (centre) and Thando Kubheka (right) at AORTIC 2025.

Dr. Siphiwe Baloyi presented two posters at the Bristol Myers Squibb Foundation Multinational Lung Cancer Control Program, Adult and Paediatric Cancers Africa Grantee Summit in Johannesburg 9-22 October.

1. Utilisation and timing of myeloma diagnostic tests before referral to clinical haematology services at Groote Schuur Hospital, Cape Town. Co-authors: Aylward R, Brown K, McMillan B, Bailey J, Tadzimirwa G, Dicks T, Du Toit C, Louw V and Verburgh E.
2. Utilisation and outcomes of Auto-HCT in Multiple Myeloma: the South African Single Centre Experience. Co-authors: Aylward R, Brown K, McMillan B, Bailey J, Tadzimirwa G, Kema A, Dicks T, Du Toit C, Louw V and Verburgh E.

Conference presentations: 50th Annual UCT Department of Medicine Research Symposium

- Adult Patients with B-Cell and T-Cell Acute Lymphoblastic Leukaemia at Groote Schuur Hospital, Cape Town, South Africa.
Kooveerjee S, du Toit C, Brown K, Bailey J, Panchoo G, Dicks T, Verburgh E. Poster presentation.
- Peripheral whole blood gene expression biomarkers for differentiation of TB lymphadenitis, lymphoma, and other causes of peripheral lymphadenopathy.
Mabuza N, Mendelsohn S, Bailey J, Brown K, Antel K, Verburgh E. Poster presentation. 50th Annual Department of Medicine Research Symposium.
- Aplastic Anaemia: Outcomes in a South African transplant centre. Dicks T, Smith N, Hughes E, Brown K, Verburgh E. Oral presentation.
- Point-of-care core needle biopsy for lymphadenopathy: A cost-effective, scalable pathway to early diagnosis in tuberculosis and HIV-endemic settings.
Richardson D, Fareed-Brey W, Antel K, Brown K, Bailey J, Verburgh E, Cunnama L. Oral presentation.



Photograph: Nonhlanhla Mabuza presenting her poster at the 50th Annual UCT Department of Medicine Research Symposium.

Grants, partnerships, awards/honours and promotions

PhD candidate Babalwa Yekelo (photo on the right, pictured centre) won the L'Oréal-UNESCO For Women in Science National Programme Award, which recognizes young female scientists whose “groundbreaking research addresses Africa’s most urgent challenges”. The title of her research is “Discovery of Novel anticancer drugs from the traditional herbal medicinal plant, Dodonaea viscosa var. angustifolia.”

PhD student, Lungile Mapekula, won best oral presentation at the 17th Annual Haematology Oncology Conference. His prize is a sponsorship to attend next year’s EHA meeting in Sweden.

A/Prof. Estelle Verburgh was awarded a SAMRC grant for the project entitled “Blood Research and EnhAnced Training against HIV in South Africa (BREATH-SA). The purpose of this research training grant is to train students and young researchers in HIV-related transfusion medicine and haematology research to perform high-quality HIV research to address relevant research questions in South Africa.

A/Prof. Estelle Verburgh was awarded the UCT 2025 Enabling Grant Seeker Excellence Award to support research in Lymphoma diagnostics.

Dr. Siphiwe Baloyi and A/Prof. Estelle Verburgh were awarded a Bristol Myers Squibb Foundation (BMSF) grant for the project entitled ‘Addressing Disparities in Myeloma Care to Promote Equitable Access and Treatment’. This project addresses disparities in diagnosis and treatment using data-driven strategies, professional training, and patient-centered support.



Graduation and exam news

The Haematology team would like to congratulate the following students who have passed their college exams with the CMSA or obtained a research degree at UCT:

FC Path (SA) Haem Part II

Dr. Rory Shein

Sub-specialty Certificate in Clinical Haematology

Dr. Zeena Faud

M.Sc.

MSc candidate Lincoln Makofane (photograph, left) graduated in September with an MSc in Haematology, with Distinction. The title of his research was "An investigation of the impact of the B cell lymphoma factor Activation Induced Cytidine Deaminase (AICDA/AID) on epigenetic plasticity".

Dr. Andrea Coetzee obtained her MSc degree for her study entitled "First-Time Red Blood Cell Transfusions in the Emergency Department: Are Patient Blood Management Principles Implemented?" under the supervision of Prof. Vernon Louw (Primary supervisor) and Dr. Annemarie Kropman (Co-supervisor)



PhD.

Dr. Vanitha Rambiritch obtained her PhD degree for her study entitled "Developing a validated framework for a Patient Blood Management toolkit appropriate for the South African healthcare context" under the supervision of Prof. Vernon Louw (Primary supervisor) and A/Prof. Estelle Verburgh (Co-supervisor).



Publication list: 2025

- Qiao J, Bailly J, Opie J. Key Issues at the Forefront of Diagnosis and Testing for Antiphospholipid Syndrome. *Clinical and Applied Thrombosis/Hemostasis* 30 (2024): 10760296241306751.
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PLEASE SEND ANY HAEMATOLOGY-RELATED NEWS, EVENTS, ACHIEVEMENTS, AND PUBLICATIONS FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY TO JUNE 2026 TO HAEMATOLOGY NEWS UCT AT haematologynews-group@uct.ac.za

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON HAEMATOLOGY AT UCT, PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT
<https://health.uct.ac.za/haematology>

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