



**MEDIA STATEMENT ISSUED BY STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY  
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Stellenbosch University (SU) today launched the African Cancer Institute (ACI), which will, through its programmes, assist South Africa and other African countries to build capacity, provide education and training and promote national and international collaboration in the field of cancer.

The ACI will be situated in SU's Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences (FMHS). Its aim is to conduct high-level cancer research that will contribute to improving the prevention, diagnosis and management of cancer in Africa.

There is a critical need for interventions that will help prevent cancer and improve access to treatment and care of patients with cancer on the African continent, said Prof Jimmy Volmink, Dean of the FMHS. "Cancer is a neglected disease in Africa. We are sleepwalking into a tsunami of cancer which is going to be quite devastating," Volmink said.

"Most cancers are treatable and many are curable. Yet many people in Africa do not have access to basic diagnostic and treatment facilities. This is unacceptable and we need global advocacy to address this," Volmink said.

SU is well-positioned to help address the challenges. Cancer research is done not only at the FMHS, but in seven other faculties of the university across a wide range of departments, divisions and units.

"By consolidating our efforts under a single umbrella, we are taking it to a new level. This makes SU the leading entity in South Africa in terms of cancer research," said Prof Eugene Cloete, Vice-Rector: Research of SU.

The newly appointed Director of the ACI, Prof Vikash Sewram, said cancer is a significant contributor to non-communicable disease morbidity and mortality in Africa, whilst in South Africa it is already the sixth leading cause of mortality and a public health problem of considerable magnitude.

Sewram said the aim of the ACI was to become an internationally recognised comprehensive cancer research centre, conducting and coordinating multidisciplinary research relevant to Africa. “The ACI will also provide a strong platform for scholarly growth and knowledge production in pursuit of high-quality evidence-based cancer care. Research at the ACI will cut across the cancer continuum – spanning prevention, screening, early detection, diagnosis, treatment or palliative care,” he said.

Volmink emphasised the importance of collaboration, saying the ACI aims to be a champion for combating cancer on the African continent. “We can do this even better if we partner effectively with other institutions in South Africa, Africa and globally who share our vision,” he said.

Ms Sue Janse van Rensburg, CEO of the Cancer Association of South Africa (CANSA) added: “The establishment of the African Cancer Institute will not only facilitate a more extensive platform for cancer and cancer related research in South Africa and the African continent, but will further provide opportunities to address the concerning limitations in resource development and community services. As a leader non-profit organisation in cancer control and research, CANSA is very grateful for the opportunity to partake in this very exciting initiative created by Stellenbosch University that will surely have a positive impact on the increasing cancer burden in Africa and South Africa in particular.”

The ACI had already signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the prestigious University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center. This MOU will facilitate collaboration in developing training programmes, faculty exchanges, specific oncology courses and collaborative research projects to advance the understanding of cancer and improving cancer care.

“MD Anderson is proud to partner with the African Cancer Institute on our shared mission of eradicating cancer, and looks forward to working together on joint initiatives to build capacity for advanced cancer care in Africa,” said Dr Oliver Bogler, Senior Vice President Academic Affairs at the MD Anderson Cancer Center.

“Cancer shows vast diversity across the geographic, ethnic, racial and cultural spectrum around the world. We are excited about the new opportunities to advance our understanding of cancer with the launch of the African Cancer Institute at Stellenbosch University,” said Dr Shubhra Ghosh, Project Director of Global Academic Programs at the MD Anderson Cancer Center.

Projects at the ACI will, amongst others, focus on:

- Providing a greater understanding of the aetiology of cancer within South Africa and the African continent;
- Improving risk profiling for surveillance and monitoring;
- Fostering innovative approaches for integrative cancer medicine;
- Developing cost-effective and readily available diagnostic and prognostic technologies;
- Discovering new therapies and enhancing current therapies for cancer treatment;
- Increasing research capacity and the technical skills of scientists, clinicians and other health care professionals;
- Ensuring knowledge dissemination and public awareness around cancer prevention and management; and
- Evidence-based policy formulation for cancer prevention, management and control.

For downloadable photographs and more information go to [www.sun.ac.za/acilaunch](http://www.sun.ac.za/acilaunch).

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