

BIOGRAPHY

of

Derick van Vuuren

Derick van Vuuren grew up in Potchefstroom in the North West province. He completed a B.Sc. degree at Potchefstroom University (now the North-West University, Potchefstroom campus) with majors in Physiology and Biochemistry. Physiology grabbed his interest, so in 2005 he continued at the PUK with a B.Sc. Honours in Physiology. The focus of his honours project was to utilise a population-based approach to investigate the link between inflammation and obesity-related cardiovascular dysfunction in African compared to Caucasian women.

In search of new horizons, he left Potchefstroom after completion of his honours degree and enrolled for an M.Sc. degree at the Division of Medical Physiology at Stellenbosch University, Tygerberg campus. For the next two years he explored the phenomenon of ischaemic postconditioning in the heart. Postconditioning is a mechanical intervention at the onset of reperfusion with the potential benefit of reducing the damage incurred on a heart following the stress of ischaemia and reperfusion (such as would occur with a patient suffering from a heart attack and going for reperfusion therapy).

He continued at the Division of Medical Physiology and under the supervision of proff. Amanda Lochner and Anna-Mart Engelbrecht he completed his Ph.D degree at the end of 2013. The aim of this study was to determine the role of protein phosphatase 2A (PP2A – a major cellular protein phosphatase) in the setting of ischaemia/reperfusion, by utilising techniques such as isolated heart perfusions, cell culture models, as well as protein and enzyme analysis techniques (such as Western blotting). This research focus on protein phosphatases in cell signalling has kept him, and a few postgraduate students, quite busy in the years following his PhD.

Currently he is a senior lecturer in the division of Medical Physiology and also involved in the management and coordination of the MBChB program.