



SPANISH - SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES SYMPOSIUM

“Global Health at a crossroad”

The FIRST SPANISH - SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES SYMPOSIUM was hosted at the Faculty of Health Sciences at University of Pretoria (UP) on October 10th 2024.

The symposium, with the theme “Global Health at a Crossroad”, included a Panel Discussion on “Priorities for academic and scientific collaboration between Spain and South Africa” with the participation of important dignitaries from South Africa and Spain: **Mr. Daan Du Toit** (Deputy Director-General, International Cooperation and Resources, South African Department of Science and Innovation) and **Mr. Santiago Herrero** (Director of Cultural and Scientific Relations at the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation and Development, AECID).

Prof. Tiaan de Jager (Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences, UP), opened the symposium on behalf of Prof Sunil Maharaj (Vice-Principal, Research Innovation and Postgraduate Education, UP). Esteemed scientists from Spain and South Africa then presented their research on current global health challenges and innovative solutions from a cross-disciplinary perspective.

Four Deputy Vice-chancellors of Internationalization from the prominent Spanish universities that form the [Alliance A4U](#) also participated in the meeting: **Dr. Irene Martín** (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid), **Dr. Laura Santamaría** (Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona; UAB), **Dr. Carolina Marugán** (Universidad Carlos III de Madrid; UC3M), and **Dr. Helena Ramalinho** (Universidade Pompeu Fabra and President of A4U).

The symposium, which was the first of its kind, was impeccably coordinated by **Prof. Tivani-Mashamba-Thompson**, **Dr. Claire Newton** and our ACESDA Treasurer, **Dr. María Jesús Herrero** from the Faculty of Health Sciences, UP, in collaboration with the Faculty’s Research Support team and UP’s Department of Research and Innovation and Department of Institutional Advancement. The event was also supported by the Association of Spanish Scientists in Southern Africa (ACESDA) and the Embassy of Spain in South Africa.

The symposium featured four Spanish researchers: **Dr. Ana María Iglesias Maqueda** (UC3M), **Dr. Laila Darwich Soliva** (UAB), **Dr. Rafael Molina** (UAB) and **Dr. Fernando**



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Fernández Rebollo (UC3M), who also completed a 1-week teaching and research stay at the University of Pretoria through the Erasmus+ program. Their South-African counterparts presenting in the symposium were UP researchers: **Prof. Llewellyn Padayachy** (Faculty of Health Sciences), **Prof. Nenene Qekwana** (Faculty of Veterinary Sciences), **Prof. Vashnee Govender** (Faculty of Veterinary Sciences), **Prof. Olawande Daramola** (Faculty of Engineering, Built Environment & IT) and **Dr. Sean Patrick** (Faculty of Health Sciences),

Following the presentations, our ACESDA member, **Dr. Francesc Xavier Gómez-Olivé** (Public Health, CVD and HIV, MRC/ University of Witwatersrand) and **Prof. Ericka L'Abbe** (UP) joined Dr. Ramalhino, Mr. Du Toit and Mr. Herrero in an engaging panel discussion moderated by Prof. Mashamba-Thompson focused on avenues of collaboration and funding programs for exchanges between the two countries.

Delegates from other South African universities also participated in the meeting, including **Prof. Amadi Ihunwo** (Head of School of Anatomy), and **Prof. William Daniels** (Head of School of Physiology), both from the University of the Witwatersrand.

The event, which was directed by **Dr Emmanuel Matsebatlela** (Faculty of Health Sciences, UP), also included a visit to various facilities of the University of Pretoria, including the impressive Nuclear Medicine Research Infrastructure (NuMeRI), the innovative Skills Lab and the high-tech Health Sciences Library, and culminated in a tour of the beautiful Hatfield Campus.

Closing remarks by **H.E. Raimundo Robredo**, Ambassador of Spain in South Africa, highlighted the importance of increasing exchanges between scientists and universities from South Africa and Spain, to strengthen and build on existing excellent bilateral relations between the two countries. He also announced the plan to open a cultural-scientific center at the Embassy of Spain in Pretoria.

The commitment and support provided by **Prof. de Jager** and his colleagues at the University of Pretoria ensured that this was an outstanding academic event that sets the scene for future collaborative events between Spain and South Africa.



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Meeting **recording**:



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