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UCT heart researcher and collaborators receive R25 million Australian grant

Professor Karen Sliwa, director of UCT's Hatter Institute for Cardiology Research in Africa, together with several Australian collaborators, have been awarded a R25 million research grant by the National Health and Medical Research Council of Australia.

The grant will go towards building research capacity in reducing inequality in heart disease in South Africa and Australia. One of the research projects this money is earmarked for, is the Hatter Institute's Heart of Africa Study. The money will be used to support PhD students and for payment of equipment and running expenses. The grant period is from 2013 to 2017.

"These funds will allow us to move forward with research projects aimed at a reduction of the precursors of heart disease in pregnancy or identifying those conditions earlier to reduce maternal morbidity and mortality related to cardiovascular disease," says a delighted Professor Sliwa.

Professor Sliwa's long-time collaborator, Professor Simon Stewart, Head of Preventative Cardiology at the Baker IDI Heart & Diabetes Institute in Melbourne, Australia and Honorary Professor at the Hatter Institute, is among the chief investigators for this grant. She adds, "this is one of a few South-South collaborations and the funding will strengthen our partnership with the Baker IDI Heart & Diabetes Institute".

Professor Stewart and Sliwa are founders of a population study in Africa called the *'Heart of Soweto Study'* which is aimed investigating the prevalence, presentation and management of cardiac disease in an urban African population. The study, which looked at more than 8000 patients, highlighted the high prevalence of

hypertension, obesity and cardiac disease in women of childbearing age.

Professor Sliwa has recently expanded her population studies (under the umbrella of the '*Heart of Africa study*') to other African countries, including Mozambique, Nigeria, Tanzania, Kenya and Sudan. She has designed a number of innovative research programs and leveraged funding for several major research projects, not only in South Africa and the rest of Africa, but also internationally.

ENDS

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