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Innovative training programme helps strengthen paediatric care in Africa

UCT Professor Jo Wilmshurst to deliver inaugural lecture, 'Reversing the Brain Drain', on 30 July 2014 at 17h30, Student Learning Centre Lecture Theatre, Anatomy Building, Faculty of Health Sciences, UCT

Altogether 98% of Africa-based paediatrics who have trained at the University of Cape Town as part of the African Paediatric Fellowship Programme (APFP) return to their home institution or country to develop increased child health capacity in these areas.

The significance of the APFP will be discussed by Professor Jo Wilmshurst, Head of Paediatric Neurology at the Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital, Department of Paediatrics and Child Health, UCT, in her inaugural lecture, "Reversing the Brain Drain". The lecture will take place on 30 July 2014 at 17h30 in the Student Learning Centre Lecture Theatre, Anatomy Building, Faculty of Health Sciences, UCT.

Professor Wilmshurst, Director of the APFP, says: "The burden of disease in Africa is significant and access to healthcare professionals is lacking, especially those trained to care for children. Retention of skills is challenged by the brain drain."

The APFP has been creating a network of skilled African healthcare professionals who can develop capacity in, and lobby for, child health through clinical service provision, training, education and research.

The programme has established training partnerships in 11 African countries: Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe. These partnerships recommend trainees to the APFP to increase healthcare capacity in priority areas.

Since 2008, 55 fellows have trained or are currently being trained in general paediatrics or diverse paediatric sub-specialities. Examples of the programme's successes are:

- Dr Joyce Balagadde-Kambugu established the paediatric oncology service at the Uganda Cancer Institute. The institute attends to 400 new patients under the age of 18 each year. Dr Balagadde-Kambugu provides in-patient care to about 40 children and runs three out-patient clinics a week. She completed a one-year fellowship in

- paediatric haematology-oncology in February 2012.
- After Mariam Karanja from Kenya trained for a year in the neonatal unit at Groote Schuur Hospital in 2008, she returned to her work at the neonatal unit in Kenyatta National Hospital. She focused on improving ventilation support and introducing kangaroo care for neonates.
 - Kenyan paediatric neurologist Pauline Samia has successfully lobbied for improved formulations of anti-epileptic drugs to be made available in her country. She is the secretary of the Kenya Paediatric Association (KPA) and is part of the scientific committee for the annual national KPA meetings.
 - Bashir Admani, a past fellow in paediatric nephrology (2006 - 2007), has established a paediatric nephrology service at the Aga Khan Hospital in Kenya.
 - Kondwani Kwazi returned to Malawi in 2011 after qualifying as a general paediatrician under the APFP. He has introduced innovative breathing support for new-born babies added to the neonatal unit, called "bubble CPAP", and supported the establishment of effective kangaroo care in the unit.

In her inaugural lecture, Professor Wilmshurst will discuss how her work in child neurology, using epilepsy as an example, relates to care for children locally and across Africa. She will address how training and healthcare recommendations, relevant and viable for the African setting, are being established.

Professor Wilmshurst, who joined UCT in 2000, has over 60 peer-reviewed publications. Her fields of interest include common high-impact diseases and rare neurological disorders.

Media who want to attend the inaugural lecture, should RSVP to Kemantha Govender on 021 650 5672 or kemantha.govender@uct.ac.za.

ENDS

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