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## **UCT's African Brain Child team triumphs at National Research Foundation Awards**

The University of Cape Town's [African Brain Child](#) (ABC) team has been awarded the prestigious [National Research Foundation's \(NRF\) Science Team Award](#) in recognition of its work extending the boundaries of scientific research in Africa and its positive impact on society. ABC is based at the [Neuroscience Institute](#) and the Red Cross Children's Memorial Hospital

Children in Africa face a high burden of conditions that cause acute brain injury, including traumatic brain injury, meningitis, brain tumours, epilepsy and hydrocephalus – which are some of the conditions that often lead to poor health outcomes. Collectively, these account for the largest global burden of premature deaths and long-term disabilities among children.

Part of the problem is that these conditions are poorly understood because it is difficult to study the brain.

ABC addresses the research gaps in brain conditions often sorely neglected in science and healthcare policies. Their overall aim is to use a science-led approach to make a meaningful difference in the lives of children.

They have developed a sophisticated, technology-based clinical infrastructure for patient care and have the world's largest experience of advanced brain monitoring in children, resulting in work that has influenced international treatment protocols.

They also developed an African-first neuroscience biobank of brain tissue, pathology tissue, brain interstitial fluid, and ventricular cerebrospinal fluid.

ABC director Professor Anthony Figaji said this creates exciting opportunities for their interdisciplinary group, which comes from diverse backgrounds, to blend the best of laboratory and clinical research. He said their interests span brain physiology, inflammation, metabolism, genomics, and pharmacokinetics, and they collaborate widely with different disciplines, believing that this is key to unravelling the complexity of the brain in a comprehensive manner.

"ABC believes that Africa should be one of the world leaders in clinically meaningful neuroscience and that this can be accomplished by leveraging amazing, and often unique, opportunities on the continent by investing in infrastructure, research capacity, and most importantly, people," Figaji.

Figaji said ABC's commitment to social impact and advocacy for patients and learners is unwavering. They run a prevention programme to reduce head injuries on South African roads and they host an annual International Brain Awareness Week programme for learners from disadvantaged schools to inspire the next generation of neuroscientists.

***ENDS***

***Issued by: UCT Communication and Marketing Department***

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