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UCT professor to explore how data shape public health decision-making

12 May 2026 | 18:00 SAST | Chris Hani Lecture Theatre, Level 1, Chris Hani Building, upper campus



Prof Sheetal Silal

Photo: Supplied

Amid growing uncertainty in public health, the director of the [Modelling and Simulation Hub, Africa \(MASHA\)](#) at the University of Cape Town (UCT), Professor Sheetal Silal, will present an inaugural lecture exploring how simulation models support public health decision-making by integrating data on diseases, populations and health systems to predict the impact of policy choices, offering a systems perspective on complex health challenges.

Professor Silal's lecture is titled, "Models, Policy and People: Predicting Health Impact in a Complex World."

She said: "I chose this topic because my work has consistently shown that the greatest challenges in public health modelling are not only scientific but also lie in how model recommendations are translated into action. Through experience modelling a range of diseases across low- and middle-income countries globally, I have seen how model outputs can inform policy – but also where gaps remain between analysis and implementation.

"This lecture brings together those insights, reflecting a growing recognition that modelling must be connected to people, policy and real-world systems. It is an opportunity to highlight the importance of decision support and the need for collaborative, multidisciplinary approaches to improve health outcomes."

Drawing on her work, Silal will reflect on the role of collaboration in strengthening decision support and improving health outcomes. The lecture will highlight how integrating diverse expertise can contribute to more equitable and resilient health systems.

Silal is a professor in the [Department of Statistical Sciences](#). Her research focuses on mathematical modelling of infectious diseases, with particular attention to vector-borne and vaccine-preventable diseases across Africa and beyond.

She has played a leading role in advancing modelling as a decision-support tool, including as a key contributor to the South African COVID-19 Modelling Consortium, where her work informed national pandemic planning and response.

- Members of the media wishing to attend the lecture are requested to [RSVP](#) via email.

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