



The Neuroscience Mentorship and Capacity Development Program

Mental disorders in Africa are not given high priority in our healthcare systems and communities. In sub-Saharan Africa, mental and substance use disorders account for 19% of the disability-associated disease burden (Lund et al., 2015). Furthermore, it is reported that mental and substance abuse disorders account for high comorbidity with HIV, developmental disorders, epilepsy and the growing burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in Sub-Saharan Africa. It is reported that South Africa has a high rate of traumatization and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) amongst the youth (Lund et al., 2015). Additionally, it has been reported that one of the contributing factors to the poor attention on mental disorders, despite being rated as the 3rd overall burden diseases in South Africa is funding. Africa has poor mental health research capacity and infrastructure with highly limited funding devoted to research, inadequacy of trained mental health research personnel, a shortage of infrastructural support, and few opportunities for training, supervision and career development in mental health research (Thorncroft et al. 2012).

The aim of The Neuroscience Mentorship and Capacity Development Program is to establish regional neuroscience mentorship and to build capacity with the following objectives:

1. Increase the understanding of mental disorders and their management
2. Promote growth of individual neuroscientists through skills development
3. Improve interdisciplinary collaboration in neuroscience in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region
4. Develop neuroscience training sites through mentorship programs across the SADC region

The Neuroscience Mentorship and Capacity Development Program is an initiative of the Southern African Neuroscience Society (SANS) and the Society of Neuroscientists of Africa

(SONA). These societies play a crucial role in developing and expanding neuroscience research in Africa and southern Africa.

Call for Mentors.

This program requires Principal Investigators (PIs) currently conducting neuroscience research in mental health to undertake a mentorship role by training neuroscience researchers and junior faculty members. The PI will be required to train a neuroscience faculty member from a University in the SADC region over a period of 3 months in the PI's existing project. The research component undertaken by the mentee should yield a publication at the end of the program. The mentee's travel and living expenses will be covered by the Program.

Following the mentorship program, successful mentees will be eligible to apply for additional funding to develop a similar laboratory at their home university.

If you are interested in becoming a mentor, kindly contact Dr Lihle Qulu.

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