



SAASTA

South African Agency for Science
and Technology Advancement

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Media Release

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For immediate release:

SAASTA to host a series of science webinars

The South African Agency for Science and Technology Advancement will be hosting a series of science webinars, to profile the role that science is playing in the fight against COVID-19. SAASTA will be partnering with various science organisations for live discussions and Q&A that will be open to the public.

The first webinar, “Profiling the National Ventilator Project”, will take place tomorrow, Wednesday, 18 November 2020, from 16h30 to 18h30. The session will highlight and celebrate the work of the National Ventilation Project by one of the National Research Foundation’s Facilities, the South African Radio Astronomy Observatory (SARAO), which has been leading South Africa’s efforts to create low cost ventilators in order to treat hospitalised COVID-19 patients.

In the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, with statistics of infections increasing rapidly all over the world, the South African Department of Trade, Industry and Competition mandated the design, production, development and procurement of local respiratory ventilators to meet the anticipated demand.

The National Ventilator Project aims to support the needs of hospitals to treat patients infected by COVID-19 with locally designed and manufactured respiratory ventilators, and help support the government’s efforts to combat the pandemic.

The efforts of the National Ventilator Project are supported by the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), an entity of the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI), in collaboration with a number of local partners. The CSIR has completed work on locally manufactured respiratory ventilators which were rolled out nationwide to patients showing respiratory distress in the early stages of COVID-19 infections.

“We look forward to an excellent webinar with industry partners and policy makers within the science community to share exciting developments and brilliant innovations that are being used to combat the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Njabulo Duma, a project officer from the South African Agency for Science and Technology Advancement’s (SAASTA’s) Science Awareness Platforms division. The idea of the webinar series came as result of the continuous efforts by SAASTA to bring awareness to the various scientific efforts in the country.

With COVID-19 highlighting the importance of science engagement, platforms such as this webinar series can add to important discussions. The upcoming webinar session will allow for the South African public as well as the science community to bring awareness and celebrate the work our scientists and various organisations have done in the response to combatting the spread of the COVID-19.

Mr Willem Esterhuyse, Head Engineer at South African Radio Astronomy Observatory (SARAO). As head engineer, Mr Esterhuyse is responsible for the successful deployment of the various phases of the MeerKAT project, an initiative of SARAO located in the Karoo. Mr Esterhuyse leads teams for the development, design, construction, integration, testing and qualification the MeerKAT Telescope. He is also responsible for establishing the required processes to ensure its delivery is successful.

To register for the webinars click on the link below:

<https://www.saasta.ac.za/celebrating-health-profiling-the-role-of-science-in-the-fight-against-covid-19/>

Ends

Date: Wednesday, 18 November 2020

Time: 16:30 - 18:30

Venue: Zoom

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About the South African Agency for Science and Technology Advancement (SAASTA)

SAASTA is a business unit of the National Research Foundation (NRF) with the mandate to advance public awareness, appreciation and engagement of science, engineering and technology in South Africa.

SAASTA's contribution to the NRF's vision is to grow the pool of quality learners today who will become the scientists and innovators of tomorrow.

It aims to be the leading science advancement agency in the country by promoting and communicating the value and impact of science, technology and innovation in a dynamic knowledge economy. It also intends to contribute significantly towards building a science, engineering and

technology (SET) human resource base. For more information on the operations and programs within the NRF please visit www.saasta.ac.za

About the National Research Foundation (NRF):

The National Research Foundation (NRF) was established on 1 April 1999 as an independent statutory body in accordance with the National Research Foundation Act. The NRF is a key public entity responsible for supporting the development of human resources for research and innovation in all fields of science and technology.

The organisation is one of the major players in educating and training a new generation of scientists able to deal with South African and African needs. The organisation encourages public awareness and appreciation of science, engineering and technology, and facilitates dialogue between science and society. Its vision is to contribute to a prosperous South Africa based on a knowledge economy. For more information on the operations and programs within the NRF please visit www.nrf.ac.za