



SAASTA
South African Agency for Science
and Technology Advancement

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Media Release

25 November 2020

For immediate release:

NRF-SAASTA to host COVID-19 diagnostic research webinar

The South African Agency for Science and Technology Advancement will host a second webinar today (25 November 2020), titled “Profiling COVID-19 Diagnostics Research”, from 17h00 to 18h30.

The aim of the webinars is to provide a platform for local researchers and industry stakeholders to showcase groundbreaking innovations and promote development. It seeks to share these scientific inventions with the public.

This webinar will focus on the work done by Dr Lusisizwe Kwezi, a senior researcher from the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), and Dr Daniel Ndima, founding CEO at CapeBio Technologies, on the development of application-ready reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) reagents for COVID-19.

South Africa previously sourced these reagents from international companies but, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an increase in global demand, as well as unstable exchange and limited transport options. The high and pressing demand created the need for local companies to produce these reagents.

The South African government recognised the need to strengthen the country’s capacity for identifying active cases of COVID-19, to allow for more effective contact tracing and quarantining. As a result, the government sanctioned the development of point-of-care (PoC) kits for rapid, direct detection of COVID-19 that would reduce the turnaround time.

The Department of Science and Innovation, the South African Medical Research Council and Technology Innovation Agency awarded funding to local companies and scientists to produce reagents and test kits for COVID-19.

The CSIR and CapeBio Technologies’ collaboration resulted in the successful development of application-ready RT-PCR reagents for COVID-19 test kits. Under the leadership of Dr Lusisizwe Kwezi, the CSIR developed cost-effective technology for the production of Taq DNA polymerase, a

key ingredient in RT-PCR reagents. This technology was licensed by CapeBio and it was later successfully commercialised for the local and international markets.

To register click on the link below:

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

Ends

Date: Wednesday, 25 November 2020

Time: 17:00 - 18:30

Venue: Zoom

Issued by:

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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