

# UCT scientist uses award to fund TB research

University of Cape Town's Professor Valerie Mizrahi, will use her R1.5m Harry Oppenheimer Fellowship Award to develop two new areas of tuberculosis (TB) research, which are built on expertise in the biology of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* as it relates to TB pathogenesis and drug discovery.



Professor Valerie Mizrahi. Photo: Robyn Walker/UCT

The projects she intends developing will also serve as the vehicle for advanced training of talented, next-generation TB researchers who are able to work at an internationally competitive pace and standard.

“I’m excited about how the Oppenheimer Fellowship will support this research and the development of new researchers.

“Just as my work has been enabled by others, so I too hope to continue to enable younger researchers. In a very real sense, I am nothing without the people who have worked with me. The Oppenheimer Fellowship is not mine. I have had fantastic people who have dedicated years of their lives to this type of work. This award is as much theirs as it is mine because that is how science works,” she said.

The field of TB research is desperately in need of innovative approaches – TB is now the largest cause of death in the world from any infectious disease and imposes a particular burden on South Africa.

## Pioneer

Mizrahi has been one of the pioneers of applying modern molecular biological technologies to understanding the requirements for growth and pathogenesis of the tubercle bacillus (a bacterium (*Mycobacterium tuberculosis*) that is a major cause of tuberculosis). She is an outstanding researcher in the basic science of tuberculosis in Africa and widely recognised as an international leader in the field.

She is the director of the Institute of Infectious Disease and Molecular Medicine (IDM) at UCT, a member of the TB Programme Scientific Advisory Committee of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and was interim Chair of its 'Discovery Expert Group' in 2017. She is a member of the Science Interview Panel of the Wellcome Trust, and a member of the Scientific Advisory Board of the 'TB Human Challenge Model Consortium', Harvard School of Public Health.

**Source:** University of Cape Town

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