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UCT academic only African representative at World Economic Forum Global Health Council

Associate Professor and director of the Health Economics Unit at the University of Cape Town (UCT) John Ataguba has been selected to the World Economic Forum (WEF) Global Future Council on Health and Healthcare.

Health economics is a relatively new discipline in low- and middle-income countries and relates to research in areas such as cost-effectiveness analysis of healthcare provision and health systems analysis.

He commented: "Africa is rarely in the focus of innovative healthcare initiatives and that there is an under-representation of African voices in the global discourse of development." His role within the WEF Council will be to promote an agenda that benefits Africa as well as the developing world at large. He's also been tasked to design new healthcare initiatives which could be implemented globally and be appropriate for all people.

The Global Future Council on Health and Healthcare explores how healthcare systems should look by 2050, given the paradigm shifts in homecare, precision medicine and delivering value to individuals in the healthcare system. The council also examines ways in which the WEF's platform approach can be used to achieve this.

Associate Professor Ataguba highlighted that the healthcare system in South Africa has not fully exploited the possibilities of technology – this needs to change so as to meet the growing needs of the people. While exploring new technology, the health sector leadership needs to be strengthened and policies need to be transparently implemented to provide appropriate health services.

Health economists are not only using their expertise for planning, modelling and financing of health care, but their analysis is critical in the decision-making process to allocate the existing limited resources in the healthcare sector, so that they can be used wisely and meet the needs of the population.

He added that his selection will further underscore "UCT's global role as a leading research and teaching institution in Africa". The health economist also hopes that his position will show that "Africa is as capable as other continents in contributing to the global discourse on the future of health and healthcare."

"It's important to ensure that the current health inequalities are reduced substantially, even though many of the contributing factors don't lie within the health sector. So, an intersectoral approach will be needed," he concludes.

Associate Professor Ataguba's term runs until September 2019.



Associate Professor John Ataguba

PIC: Raymond Botha

ENDS

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