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26 September 2012

UCT's Mizrahi receives international grant for TB research

Professor Valerie Mizrahi, Director of the Institute of Infectious Disease and Molecular Medicine at the University of Cape Town, has been named one of 13 leading basic science researchers in the world to receive a Senior International Research Scholar (SIRS) award from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI). Mizrahi is studying mechanisms of cofactor, DNA, and nucleotide metabolism in *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, the organism that causes human tuberculosis. Her laboratory aims to contribute to the discovery of new drugs for TB by understanding mechanisms of metabolic flexibility and identifying metabolic vulnerabilities in this formidable human pathogen.

Based within the Faculty of Health Sciences, Professor Mizrahi heads the UCT node of the Centre of Excellence for Biomedical TB Research and is the Director of the Molecular Mycobacteriology Research Unit of the South African Medical Research Council.

Her work has been recognised worldwide, earning her several accolades, including the Unesco-L'Oréal For Women, the Gold Medal of the SA Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, the Distinguished Woman Scientist Award from the Department of Science and Technology and the Order of the Mapungubwe: Silver from the State President of South Africa. In 2009, Professor Mizrahi was elected into the Fellowship of the American Academy of Microbiology and was awarded an 'A' rating by the National Research Foundation.

According to the HHMI, the SIRS award supports outstanding biomedical scientists working outside the United States who have made significant contributions to fundamental research in the biological sciences.

Professor Mizrahi will receive a grant of \$100,000 per year over five years, and will be required to present her research at scientific meetings held at HHMI. These gatherings are intended to facilitate the exchange of ideas, stimulate new research and provide an opportunity for collaboration with other HHMI scientists.

The new SIRS awardees are based in Canada, Latin America, Europe, South Africa, and Australia.

“Scientific research is a global endeavour, and these grants will provide an opportunity for these highly creative and accomplished scientists to explore new avenues of biomedical research, and to mentor promising early career scientists across the world,” said HHMI President Robert Tjian.

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