

UCT and Groote Schuur break ground on neuroscience centre

Work has begun on a state-of-the-art Neuroscience Centre at Groote Schuur Hospital (GSH), which will be the hub for neuro-clinical disciplines at the hospital and University of Cape Town's neuroscience research programme.



Groote Schuur Hospital

The centre will be home to the newly-established UCT Neuroscience Institute together with the GSH Clinical Neuroscience Centre, where researchers and clinicians will work together to treat the brain and nervous system disorders that burden the South African population.

“UCT has invested in new interdisciplinary research institutes to address important problems facing our society,” says Dr Max Price, vice-chancellor of UCT. “The Neuroscience Institute is one of these - advancing medical care while helping to understand the human brain. Doing so in an African context gives us a unique opportunity to solve local problems, contribute to knowledge and build capacity in a fast-moving area of scholarship.”

Fundraising

A R125m fundraising campaign for the centre was led by the director of the Neuroscience Institute and head of surgery and neurosurgery at UCT, Professor Graham Fieggen, and was made possible through the generous support of Dr Bhavna Patel, Groote Schuur Hospital chief executive officer, Price, and generous financial contributions from the Western Cape Government Department of Health, UCT alumni and philanthropic foundations.

“The Western Cape Government is extremely proud to be part of this wonderful initiative between the Department of Health and UCT,” says Minister of Health, Dr NomaFrench Mbombo. “This is a big step towards improving healthcare for all in the Western Cape. I want to thank all the donors who made it possible for us to commence construction.”

The centre will bring together clinicians and researchers from a wide range of specialties to study and treat central nervous system infection and trauma, neurodevelopmental and neurodegenerative disease, and other prevalent mental and neurological health challenges.

“The Neuroscience Centre is built on clinical care, and academic research and teaching, through the Clinical Neuroscience Centre and the Neuroscience Institute, respectively,” says Fieggen. “We are fortunate to have tremendous strength in the areas of neurosurgery, neurology, psychiatry and psychology, and now we have a unique opportunity to bring these and other specialties together to improve treatment and advance our understanding of the brain.”

Building

The centre grew out of consultation between Groote Schuur Hospital, Western Cape Department of Health, the Department of Transport and Public Works, Heritage Western Cape and the Faculty of Health Sciences at UCT. An ideal site for the centre was identified in the J-block building at Groote Schuur Hospital, built in 1938 and home to several research and clinical facilities over the years.

The building will be expanded and refurbished to include highly specialised, multidisciplinary clinical services delivered by Groote Schuur Hospital. The centre will also be home to the UCT Neuroscience Institute, housing academic departments of key neuroscience disciplines, a neurosurgical innovation and skills laboratory, a human tissues repository (called a biobank) and attached laboratory, a state-of-the-art lecture theatre and other communal spaces, as well as direct access to the Cape University Body Imaging Centre.

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