

## Monday Paper

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### Many benefit from postdoc research



*"UCT derives many benefits from postdoc research output ... " - Dr Eshetu Worku.*

"Although I'd always wanted to specialise in health economics, such opportunities were not available in Ethiopia. Indeed, health economics is a rare specialisation area, not offered in most low and middle-income countries.

"I decided to take a postdoctoral research position at UCT's Health Economics Unit, under the supervision of Professor Di McIntyre, to further my senior level research on the social determinants of health,.

"I believe that UCT is one of the best academic institutes in the world. It has a good reputation, and rare research unit entities like the Health Economics Unit. Other features include its research output, excellent teaching and learning facilities, many high-quality academics, supervisors, research-supporting facilities such as internet access, library facilities, and the proportion of international students that pursue their studies at the university.

"In recent years, many African economies (including South Africa's) have achieved substantial improvement in their economic growth. Despite this, the level of poverty has not been significantly reduced. By contrast, the absurd inequality between the poor and rich has been increasing.

"Similarly, health inequalities between and within countries are also increasing. To a large extent this gap is caused by social determinants of health, on which relatively little research has been done, particularly in developing countries. My research contributes to closing the gap.

"UCT derives many benefits from postdoc research output, through the publication of high-profile, peer-reviewed journal articles. And in addition to their research, many postdocs participate in teaching and seminars, and in developing teaching materials and other activities in their respective departments.

"Having a network of postdocs at UCT is good, and helps postdocs to support each other if necessary, to exchange information and to develop better bargaining power to protect their benefits.

"However, the network depends on the individual's interest, available spare time for networking activities, additional responsibilities, and long-term objectives. In my view, creating a postdoc association and having (at most) one or two meetings per year would improve the interaction.

"Currently I have a three-year visitor-researcher permit from South African Home Affairs, which will expire in August 2011. I haven't finalised my future plans, but will be looking for related employment after completing my fellowship. My plans also depend on the current research project goals, as well as what the unit plans to achieve through the postdoc fellowship programme."

<http://www.uct.ac.za/mondaypaper/?id=7578>