

Health Economics Unit

School of Public Health and Family Medicine
University of Cape Town



Research and capacity strengthening
in Africa to improve health systems



**HEALTH
ECONOMICS
UNIT**



“The Unit built its credibility on the back of objective, high-quality, policy-relevant research and training. It demonstrated foresight in undertaking forward-thinking research that government had not always identified as a priority, and sourcing funding from donors for self-initiated projects; this enabled it to engage in innovative, long-term research and present timely data to government”

Extract from a report for the Alliance for Health Policy & Systems Research (World Health Organisation) that analysed the effectiveness and sustainability of the HEU in 2009 (by Jane Doherty).

About HEU

The Health Economics Unit (HEU) was established in early 1990 in the School of Public Health and Family Medicine at the University of Cape Town. The HEU works to improve the performance of health systems through informing health policy and enhancing technical and management capacity in Sub-Saharan Africa. Its foundation is academic excellence in health economics and related health systems issues.

Objectives

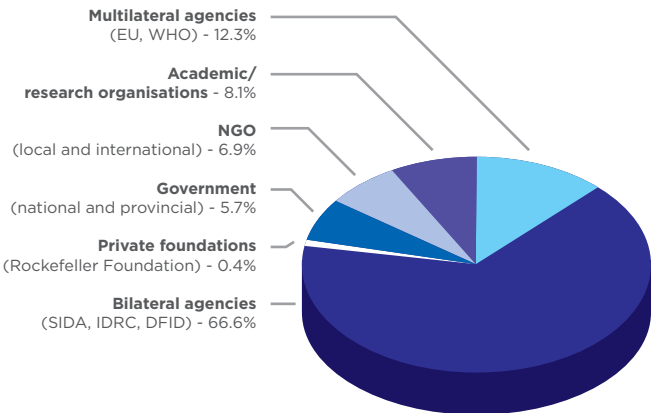
The four core objectives of the HEU are:

- To conduct high quality research in health economics, health policy and systems.
- To train at the post-graduate level to improve technical research and health systems capacity.
- To develop capacity in health economics and related health systems research in Africa.
- To provide technical support to facilitate the translation of health policies into practical programmes.

Funding

The HEU is soft-funded and does not have core funding apart from one university post and one National Research Foundation Chair.

The HEU relies on raising funds through project grants, mainly from international donors and agencies.



Research staff development

The HEU has a diversified staff portfolio. Over the years, the HEU has employed staff members from a wide range of countries, in Africa, Europe, Asia and the Americas. Honorary academics, postdoctoral fellows, PhD candidates, Masters students and support staff all contribute to the intellectual life at HEU.

The key values guiding staff at the HEU are:

- Excellence and independence.
- Fairness, social responsiveness and accountability in health systems.
- Respect for collaborators and stakeholders.
- Innovative thinking, to ensure that work remains ground-breaking.

The HEU invests heavily in developing the skills of its research staff members. This includes paying course fees for postgraduate study, allocating time for staff to engage in study, allocating time for staff to write journal articles, support for attendance at international conferences, providing supervision and providing sabbaticals.

The HEU has also sought support from an internationally renowned health economist, the retired Prof. Gavin Mooney (formerly a professor at Curtin University and currently an honorary professor at Sydney University and the University of Cape Town). Prof. Mooney was funded by the Melon Foundation to build capacity at the HEU, especially with respect to the writing and publication of journal articles.



Sue Cleary and Di McIntyre with Gavin Mooney at his Honorary Doctorate ceremony at UCT - 2009



Senior research staff

Sue Cleary

Director

Research interest: Economics of HIV-treatment and prevention, primarily in the areas of equity, efficiency and the costs of scaling-up.

Teaching: Postgraduate Diploma in Health Economics Convenor; teaches modules for the Masters in Public Health specialising in Health Economics Programme

Di McIntyre

Professor

Research interest: Health care financing; health system equity; access to and utilisation of health services; geographic allocation of health care resources; the role of the private health sector; public/private sector mix issues.

Teaching: Teaches modules for the Masters in Public Health specialising in Health Economics Programme and the Postgraduate Diploma in Health Economics Programme; undertakes considerable PhD supervision

Lucy Gilson

Professor (jointly appointed as Professor at UCT and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine).

Research interest: health equity; health system financing and organisation; health policy development & implementation; health management

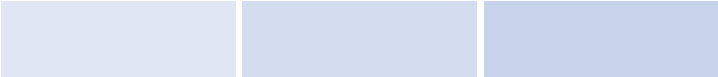
Teaching: Oliver Tambo Fellowship Programme Coordinator and teacher; teaches modules for the Masters in Public Health Programme; undertakes PhD supervision

Edina Sinanovic

Senior Lecturer

Research interest: Economic evaluation of interventions for tuberculosis and cervical cancer; scaling up health services; public-private partnerships in health care.

Teaching: PhD Coordinator; teaches modules for the Masters in Public Health specialising in Health Economics Programme and the Postgraduate Diploma in Health Economics Programme; supervises Masters and PhD students



Research Projects

The HEU collaborates with a diverse set of research partners, both regionally and internationally.

Long-term research projects

SHIELD: Strategies for Health Insurance for Equity in Less Developed Countries

The SHIELD project aims to identify the major equity challenges in the health systems of three African countries (Ghana, Tanzania and South Africa) through an understanding of financing and benefit incidence.

(with Health Research Unit - Ghana Health Service; Centre for Health Policy - University of the Witwatersrand; Ifakara Health Institute - Tanzania; London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine; Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen - Netherlands; Medical Management Centre - Sweden; 2006-2010)



SHIELD team

CREHS: Consortium for Research into Equitable Health Systems

CREHS aims to increase knowledge on how to strengthen health systems in ways that preferentially benefit the poorest and to strengthen the capacity of partners to support local and global policy development.

(with Centre for Health Policy - University of the Witwatersrand; Ifakara Health Institute - Tanzania; Kenya Medical Research Institute; London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine; Indian Institute of Technology, Madras - India; Health Policy Research Group - Nigeria; International Health Policy Programme - Thailand; 2004-2010)



CREHS annual meeting in Oxford

NRF: National Research Foundation South African Research Chair in Health and Wealth

The overall research focus of the Chair is on the inter-play of health and wealth in the South African context and the impact of a range of government policies on health.

(2008-2011)

REACH: Researching Equity in Access to Health Care

REACH focuses on how health systems could contribute more effectively to achieving development goals by actively promoting equitable access to health care.

(with McMaster University - Canada; Centre for Health Policy - University of the Witwatersrand; 2007-2010)

Eliciting public preferences in relation to National Health Insurance in South Africa

This project aims to disseminate information on current health system challenges and health system reform options; to provide regional civil society platforms for information sharing and preference elicitation with respect to national health system reform; and to ensure that these preferences are taken into account in policy deliberations.

(with Black Sash and Health-e News Service; 2010-2011)

Strengthening health policy analysis research and training through a focus on approaches to comparative and synthesis analyses

This project aims to develop the methods for synthesising health policy analysis work, and existing empirical studies around key themes.

(with London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine; Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs - Syracuse University; UNAIDS; 2009-2011)

Health policy analysis capacity development in Africa

The aim of this project is to strengthen health policy analysis training in Africa and involves curriculum development and short courses.

(with Health Policy Research Group - Nigeria; Institute of Development Studies - University Dar es Salaam; Tropical Institute of Community Health - Great Lakes University of Kenya; School of Public Health, University of the Western Cape; Centre for Health Policy - University of the Witwatersrand; 2008-2010)

Action research to support local level planning and management

This project will support local managers through a process of action research addressing their priority planning and management needs.

(with the University of the Western Cape, the Western Cape provincial Department of Health and the City of Cape Town health directorate; 2010 - 2012)



Health policy synthesis workshop

Short-term research projects

Short-term research projects focus on the cost of scaling up the integrated cervical cancer prevention programme and economic analyses of increased access to TB and HIV diagnosis, treatment and adherence support.

Postgraduate courses

The HEU offers the following postgraduate courses:

PhD

The HEU supervises a limited number of students undertaking a PhD by dissertation.

Masters in Public Health specialising in Health Economics

The programme is the only regional Masters in Public Health programme within Anglophone Africa that offers a specialisation in health economics and is convened with the School of Public Health and Family Medicine.

Masters in Health Economics

The programme aims to equip economists to apply forms of economic theory, principles and techniques to the health sector and is convened with the School of Economics.

Postgraduate Diploma in Health Economics

The curriculum gives a thorough introduction to economics as applied to health and the health care sector; it is the first online Postgraduate Diploma in Health Economics to be available from an African university.

Postgraduate Diploma in Health Management

The programme was initiated by the HEU, but now falls under the general School of Public Health & Family Medicine activities and is run in collaboration with the Graduate School of Business. It is intended for senior health managers, particularly those working in the public sector, and aims to develop the practices and behaviours of strategic and effective leaders in order to strengthen the South African health system. It is part of a broader health management programme, known as the 'Oliver Tambo Fellowship Programme'.

Since 1996, the Masters programmes have trained over 100 people; since 1998, the PhD programme has trained 10 people; since 2007, the Postgraduate Diploma in Health Economics has trained over 50 people and the Postgraduate Diploma in Health Management has trained over 200 people.



OTFP course in progress

Bursaries

Various sources of funding provide support towards the cost of studying HEU postgraduate courses in health economics at UCT. The HEU administers bursaries and fellowships for Masters, PhD and post-doctoral candidates.

Capacity strengthening in Africa

The HEU develops health economics capacity in Africa through participating in network programmes, providing postgraduate training and bursary opportunities and making available a wide variety of online training materials on the HEU website. The two main African networks that the HEU is involved with are:

HEPNet: Health Economics and Policy Network in Africa

The HEU coordinates this unique network of institutions that aims to build in-depth expertise in health economics and health policy analysis throughout Africa. Membership comprises research and academic institutions, as well as government in: South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana and Zimbabwe. The network's activities include support for international events attendance, a newsletter, publication exchanges and workshops and grants for in-country networking in Africa. The HEU has co-ordinated this network since its inception in 2000.

EQUINET: Regional Network for Equity in Health in East and Southern Africa

This network promotes and realises shared values of equity and social justice in health in East and Southern Africa. Since 1998, the HEU has coordinated EQUINET work around equitable financing of health systems and equitable allocation of health care resources in countries such as Namibia, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe and more recently Mozambique.



HEPNet workshop in Uganda

Policy influence

The HEU has a high profile in supporting the South African National Department of Health, having provided quality evidence-based research for policy use for two decades. Senior staff have been involved in a number of high-level government committees, provided technical support to government on numerous occasions and have conducted research commissioned by government. Recently, the HEU has become particularly prominent through its engagement in the policy dialogue around National Health Insurance, medicines' pricing and the funding of anti-retroviral therapy.

HEU efforts to influence policy were recognised by the University of Cape Town in 2009 when Professor Di McIntyre was awarded the university's first Social Responsiveness award.



Di McIntyre receiving UCT's Social Responsiveness award

Research output

The HEU mainly produces journal articles, research reports, book chapters, the occasional book as well as conference papers and posters. Other more popular types of publications include newspaper articles and short, non-technical documents (including information sheets and policy briefs) aimed at policy-makers as well as non-academic audiences.



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Contact Details

Health Economics Unit, University of Cape Town
Health Sciences Faculty, Observatory, South Africa
Tel: +27 21 406 6558
Fax: +27 21 448 8152
Email: info-heu@uct.ac.za

www.heu-uct.org.za



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