



2025

NEWSLETTER OF THE ANATOMICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE ANATOMICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

Dear colleagues and friends,

I would like to start by thanking each of you for your support and trust in me. It is both an honour and a privilege to serve as the new President of the Anatomical Society of Southern Africa (ASSA). As I step into this role, I do so with deep gratitude for the vision, leadership, and tireless dedication of the presidents who came before me, especially our Immediate-past President, Prof Albert van Schoor. Their commitment to advancing anatomy and fostering a collaborative scientific community has built the strong foundation upon which we will continue to grow. I would also like to extend a heartfelt thanks to all the ASSA Council members and representatives (past and present) for their unwavering support and service to our Society. I am also privileged to welcome the newly elected members of the ASSA Council and representatives and look forward to our journey ahead. And then, gratitude is also due to the members of our Society. Your dedication ensures that the ASSA continues to thrive as a dynamic and inclusive community of anatomists, educators, and researchers across Southern Africa.



This year was one of reflection and celebration. What a milestone and highlight it was to celebrate the 50th Annual Conference of the Anatomical Society of Southern Africa, in-person. Our sincerest appreciation goes to Prof Amadi Ihunwo and the Local Organising Committee from the University of the Witwatersrand for arranging such a memorable event that not only celebrated our history, but also charted the exciting path ahead. A huge congratulations to all the awardees and to everyone who attended, thank you for your continued support, engagement, and enthusiasm. Your contributions – whether through research, teaching, mentorship, or service – sustain the vitality of the ASSA and reinforce our shared mission to advance anatomical science in the region, Africa, and globally.

Next year, we look forward to joining our colleagues from the University of Namibia in Swakopmund, Namibia (12-15 April 2026) for our 51st Annual Conference. Please make sure to register and join us for what promises to be yet another unforgettable conference (ASSA Anatomical Society of Southern Africa 2026 Namibia). We also look forward to the IFAA 2026 event in Melbourne, Australia (13-16 August 2026) (<https://ifaa2026.org/en-AU>). We look forward to seeing the members of our society represented and excel at these events.

Thank you to the organizers of the World Anatomy Day, Dr Pamila Pillay (ASSA Honorary Editor of Proceedings) assisted by Dr Sundika Ishwarkumar-Govender (University of Johannesburg) for another highlight of our year. The fittingly themed event *Ubuntu in Anatomy: I Am Because We Are* was again a testament to the excellence and collegiality that define our Society.

We welcome Prof Petra Maass as our new ASSA Honorary Editor of the Newsletter, and thank Prof Hutchinson for her commitment in this role, ensuring that the voices, achievements, and advancements within our anatomical community are shared and celebrated. We very much look forward to reading the new edition of our newsletter and celebrating in the success of our colleagues and the associated institutions.

As we look back on a successful year, let us carry forward the spirit of collaboration, curiosity, and innovation into the year ahead. May this holiday season bring you rest, joy, and renewal, and may the coming year be filled with new opportunities for growth, discovery, and connection.

With warm regards and best wishes,
Desiré

INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF ASSOCIATIONS OF ANATOMISTS (IFAA) MATTERS



💀 **Federative International Programme on Anatomical Terminology (FIPAT)**

The *Terminologica Anthropologica* has been sent to all IFAA member associations for comment.

💀 **Federative International Committee on Ethics and Medical Humanities (FICEM) X**

The revised recommendations of Good Practice for the Donation and Study of Human Bodies and Tissues for Anatomical Examination has been forwarded to all IFAA member associations for comment. The document is available online at: <https://ifaa.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/IFAA-guidelines-220811.pdf>

💀 **President's Emergent Anatomists Programme (PEAP)**

A scientific writing workshop will be held online in January 2026; details will be announced closer to the time.

**Contribution submitted by:
Prof Beverley Kramer
Immediate past-President IFAA**

ASSA CONFERENCE 2025

The Anatomical Society of Southern Africa (ASSA) reached a great milestone this year – the celebration of the 50th annual conference! This year's conference was hosted by the Department of Anatomical Sciences of the University of the Witwatersrand. The event took place in the lovely Glenburn Lodge in Muldersdrift.

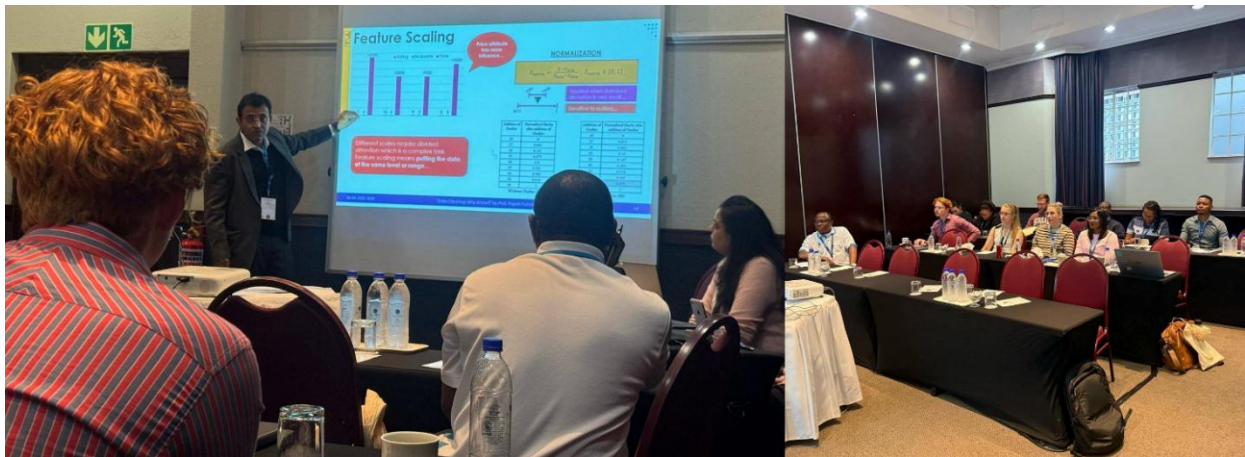


Prof Ihunwo (Chair, LoC) with Emeritus Professor B Kramer, President, International Federation of Associations of Anatomists (IFAA) during the Opening Ceremony.



Prof Ihunwo (Chair, LoC) Prof van Schoor, (President ASSA) and Dr Martin Bekker (Thompson Stibbe Lecture/ Keynote Speaker).

☒ Interest Group Workshops



Education Interest Group session – Using AI in Anatomical Sciences Teaching and Learning and Related Research.



Clinical Anatomy Interest Group session – A Focus on Functional Anatomy.



Forensic Anthropology Interest Group session – A Primer into Craniofacial Identification.



Technical Interest Group session – *Whole Body Donation Programs in Southern Africa and the Challenges it Faces.*

🏆 Game night



🦴 Oral presentations



🦴 Poster presentations



🦴 Prize winners



🦴 Members of the Wits Department of Anatomical Sciences



*Photos submitted by:
Prof Ihunwo (Chair, LOC)*

INSTITUTIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS



SEFAKO MAKGATHO
HEALTH SCIENCES UNIVERSITY



UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATALTM
INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI



UNAM
UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

UNIVERSITY OF THE
WITWATERSRAND,
JOHANNESBURG



UNIVERSITY OF THE
FREE STATE
UNIVERSITEIT VAN DIE
VRYSTAAT
YUNIVESITHI YA
FREISTATA



UFS



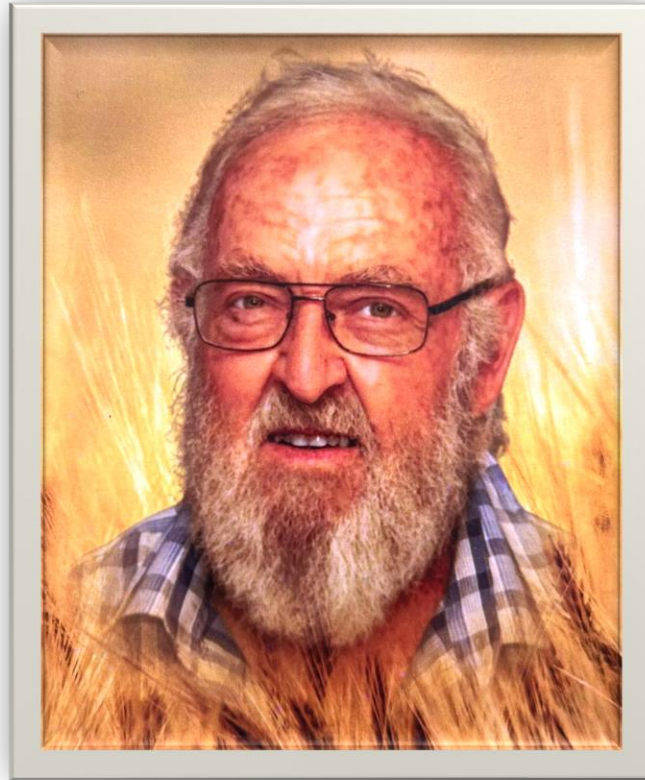
UNIVERSITY of the WESTERN CAPE
IYUNIVESITHI yaseNTSHONA KOLONI
UNIVERSITEIT van WES-KAAPLAND



Stellenbosch
UNIVERSITY
IYUNIVESITHI
UNIVERSITEIT

SEFAKO MAKGATHO HEALTH SCIENCES UNIVERSITY (SMU)

DEPARTMENT OF ANATOMY



PROF EDWARD GREEN

12 AUGUST 1948 – 8 NOVEMBER 2025

We are honoured to celebrate the life of Professor Eddie Green, aged 77, who passed away peacefully on 8 November 2025.

Professor Green was a beloved colleague with a distinguished career as a zoologist and histologist. He began his tenure in May 1989 at the former Medunsa, first serving in the Veterinary Faculty before moving to the Department of Anatomy, where he specialised in histology. He retired from SMU in December 2015 as a full professor, leaving behind a legacy of numerous publications and presentations. He also joined ASSA in 1989 and has been a life member since then. He is remembered for his impressive poster presentations at ASSA conferences, his dedication to his students and a deep love for his Creator.

He will be deeply missed by his wife, children, grandchildren, his colleagues and all who knew him.

Promotions

The following staff members have been promoted to senior lecturer: Dr Soné van der Walt, Dr Sashrika Pillay-Addinall, and Dr Nkosi Xhakaza.

Awards

Anatomy staff and students shining at SMU Research Days

- 2nd prize oral presentation, SMU School of Medicine Research Day: D. Kristen and A.C. Oettlé, *Assessing Distal Femur Sexual Dimorphism in a South African Sample Using Computer Tomography*.
- 1st prize staff oral presentation, SMU School of Dentistry Research Day: R. Kobedi, S. Rajbaran-Singh, A.C. Oettlé, *Comparison of Conventional and Cone Beam Computed Tomography-Derived Lateral Cephalograms in Cephalometric Analysis*.
- 2nd prize student oral presentation, SMU School of Dentistry Research Day: M. Meyer, R. Potgieter, A.C. Oettle, *An Innovative Method for Perpendicular Wall Thickness Measurement in Complex Three-Dimensional Structures*.
- 2nd prize oral presentation by independent researcher, SMU Research Day: D. Kristen and H. Hambrock, *Students' Perspectives on an Exemplary Instructional Design in a Human Anatomy Course*.
- 1st prize oral presentation by postgraduate student: S Hadebe and N. Xhakaza, *Incidence of the Absent Subscapular Artery and the Morphometric Analysis of the Thoracodorsal Artery in a Sample of the Black South African Population*.

Best Established Researcher for the School of Medicine Award

Professor Anna Oettlé, Dept. Human Anatomy and Histology, SMU, was awarded a Certificate of Recognition: Outstanding Achievement and Contribution as the Best Established Researcher in the School of Medicine 2025, at the SMU Dean's Research Excellence Awards, held on 7 November 2025.

Prof Oettlé's research is highly impactful, focusing on anatomy, forensic anthropology, and 3D imaging. Her prolific scholarly output includes 65 peer-reviewed publications and over 1100 citations (h-index 18), centred on human skeletal and dental variation using advanced imaging technologies. Beyond her research, her dedication to mentorship is clear: she has successfully supervised 3 postdoctoral fellows, 7 PhD, 13 MSc, and 9 BSc Honours graduates, many of whom have secured NRF funding. Her visionary leadership in securing and leading major international EU-funded projects (like *AESOP*, *Bakeng se Afrika*, and *Dirisana Plus*) has firmly positioned SMU in the global research arena.

We commend Professor Oettlé for this richly deserved recognition of her sustained excellence and impactful leadership in research.



Prof Oettlé receiving her award from Prof Dini Mawela and Prof Risenga Chauke.

Dual Alumni Awards

Professor Greg Lebona, Department of Human Anatomy and Histology, SMU, received two prestigious awards at the SMU Convocation Fundraising and Alumni Awards Gala Dinner on 25 October 2025.

Professor Lebona was recognised with the Alumni Academic, Research and Innovation Award for his significant contributions to research, academia, and innovation in health sciences. He was also conferred with the Order of the Champions of Sefako Makgatho (Gold), the University's highest honour for alumni or former executives, in recognition of his immense and enduring contributions to SMU's growth and development. This exceptional dual recognition highlights Professor Lebona's impact on both academic excellence and the foundational progress of the University.

Congratulations to Professor Lebona on receiving these distinguished awards that celebrate his enduring dedication and service to SMU.



Prof Lebona receiving his award from Mr Jeff Shipalana

☠ **World Anatomy Day**

This year, the Department of Anatomy and Histology at Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU) hosted an inspiring Anatomy Day celebration, themed *Anatomy Through Our Eyes*. The event showcased the diverse and profound perspectives of students on the cornerstone of medical education.

The day was opened by the Dean of the School of Medicine, Professor Risenga Chauke, who set a powerful and memorable tone. He encouraged students to view the human body like a building, stating: "Anatomy is the structure – the walls and beams, while physiology is how it works – the lights and the Wi-Fi". Prof Chauke highlighted the gravity and honour of the department's work, reminding everyone that studying human bodies is both a privilege and a profound responsibility: "We study the dead to save the living".

Thereafter, a program followed where students shared their journey and interpretation of Anatomy through creative mediums, including art and live presentations. In the "Experiences" category, students shared personal reflections on how Anatomy transformed from an "intimidating subject" into a "wonder world that teaches you where to touch, what to feel and what lies beneath." Some articulated their experiences beautifully through poetry. Adelaide Mathebula's poem, "I am a Living Soul," celebrated the human body as a "masterpiece of interconnected systems – beautiful in my complexity," while John Khabana's piece, titled "We Study the Dead to Save the Living," captured the solemn dedication required in the dissection hall, asserting that "Anatomy is a beautiful art that demands strong will, dedication, and patience." (Both these poems are shared below).

In the "Study Tips" category, students shared fantastic ideas and creative solutions to master the subject, focusing on planning, visualisation, and engaging digital tools. The accompanying art exhibition featured works ranging from detailed pencil sketches to watercolour pieces and a vibrant clay model.

The winners in the various categories are as follows:

Category: ARTWORKS

1st place - Laurika Prinsloo, 1st year Occupational therapy student.

2nd place (and "People's Choice" award) - Shantele Mafatle, 2nd year Physiotherapy student.

3rd place - Miya Jade Robson, 1st year Occupational therapy student.

Category: EXPERIENCES

1st place - Khanya Chirwa, 2nd year MBChB student; Presentation – *Anatomy Through Our Eyes*.

2nd place - Adelaide Mathebula, 2nd year Physiotherapy student; Poem – *I am a Living Soul*.

3rd place – John Khabana, 2nd year MBChB student; Poem – *We Study the Dead to Save the Living*.

Category: STUDY TIPS

1st place - Charlize Degenaar, 2nd year Physiotherapy student

2nd place - Khanya Chirwa, 2nd year MBChB student

3rd place - Lehlogonolo Mathete, 2nd year MBChB student

I am a Living Soul
By: Adelaide Matebula

I am a Living Soul - I am a Living Soul

Deep from the chambers of my heart
Echoes beating sounds of the valves
That weave a web of security
That I am a Living Soul

It all began from the Root of Prosencephalon, Mesencephalon and
Rhombencephalon

My emotions, My thoughts,
Sight, speech, senses, behavior,
Motor and cognition function
Stem from the Prose. root

I am awake, I am alert
Because root Mese. is alive and active
And I breathe as my heart beats
I move with balance and coordination
Because root Rhombe. said yes to the call

I am a Living Soul
For me to be a living Soul
Took months of nursing and nurturing
As buccinator and orbicularis oris enabled my sucking
To the nurturing colostrum in my infant ages

I grew stronger and wiser
I matured into a full independent being
I began to see how colorful the world is
From the very thin grass to the very tall buildings my eyes perceived

This was coordinated by the marvelous intertwined network of nerves
Running in different segments of my body
I can feel it when it's hot
I can feel it when it's cold
I am an arch of majesty
Science wonders how I came about
For my formation and development
Is such a gaze to fathom and delve

My ossature is covered in thews
That enables me to
Move from one place to the other
Tissues in my body are able to repair and regenerate
Giving me a more resilient
And life-sustaining functions

I am a Living Soul

I am an intricate design
Beautiful in my complexity
Life flows through my veins as I live

My pulse races, my heart beats
Lub dub lub dub lub dub

As Atrioventricular and Semilunar gates close and open
I am a Living Soul

[Note: This poem was delivered through a recorded piece, which was much more impactful than reading it as words. This video can be viewed here (uploaded with the student's permission): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5sOSMO0y56E>]

We study the dead to save the living,
By: John Khabana

As I venture into a room oozing with animosity of death
with my mind full of curiosity
With my heart yearning for knowledge of the human body
The urge to hunt for the unknown was as ferocious as a starved lion,
A beast deprived of its meals for days

As I stand before the dead, holding a scalpel,
Gorging into the cadaver's skin
with no shred of fear nor intimidation,
with a malicious grim on my face
The naïve labelled me a butcher
Despite such a meagre title being bestowed upon me,
only a single thought rang in my mind,
"We study the dead to save the living"
these words gave me profound strength to push forward
These words are forever engraved in my psyche

As I lay down in my bedroom chambers
My body laid heavy from extreme fatigue
with a smirk of excitement displayed on my face
my curiosity for the human body grew with no restraint
And yet the taste of fulfilment is still far to behold

The more I learn, the more my hunger grew
As I ask myself...

"Why is the body manufactured this way?"

"What are the cranial nerves?"

"What makes the heart pump nonstop?"

the more I discover an answer, the more I desire for more knowledge
my thirst for knowledge cannot be quelled, it grows day by day

As I felt liberated from the shackles of the unknown
my heart rejoiced, and forever fell in love with Anatomy

What more can one mutter at this point?

Anatomy is a beautiful art,

an art that demands strong will, patience and dedication

the human body is a complex puzzle

a puzzle meant to be solved

what an honour to unravel its mysteries,

I give thanks to thee for conceiving such a marvellous being

As we celebrate this marvellous day,

We rejoice with our hearts full of gratitude

For being granted an opportunity to experience such a bliss

They say sky is the limit,

we're the transcendent who surpassed our limits,

granted with a mission to save lives

The knowledge we gained will be utilized for a great purpose

Purpose of liberating lives from the clutches of plague and death

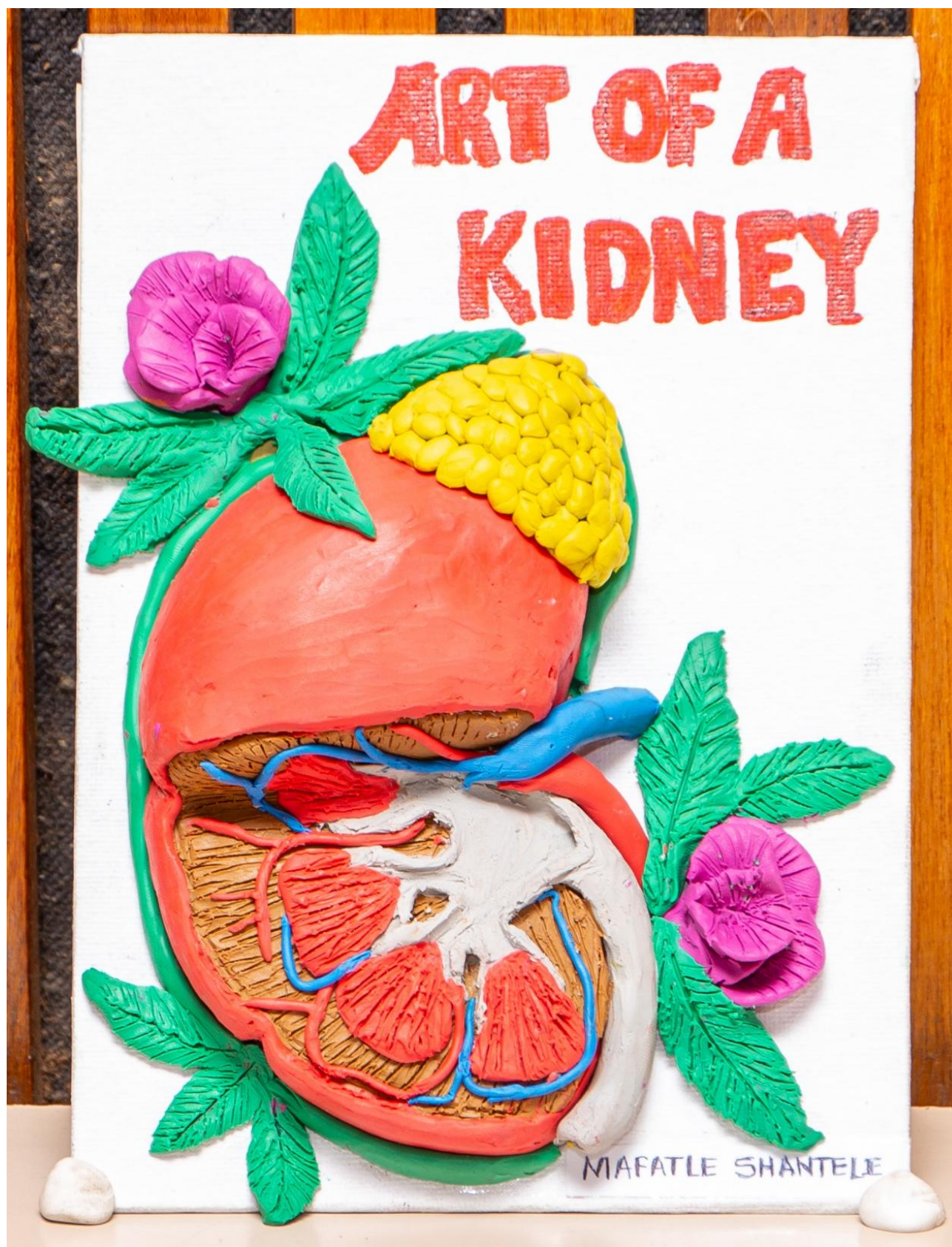
may we ascend higher as per the lord's will

Artworks

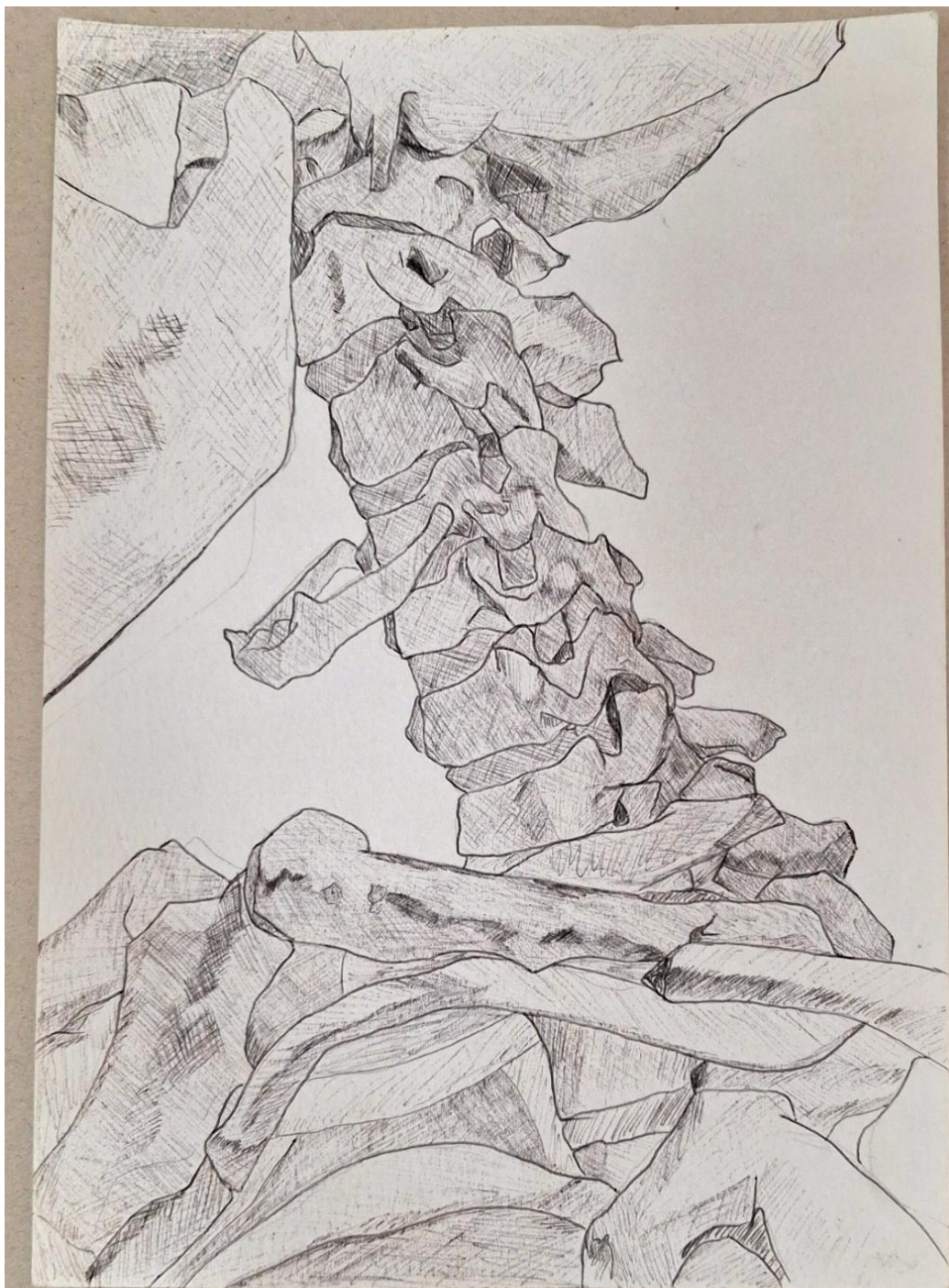
1st place - Laurika Prinsloo *The Creator's Hand*, a poem and artwork about how we reflect God in our creation, and worship Him just by living.



2nd place and People's Choice award - Shantele Mafatle, clay model of a kidney.



3rd place - Miya Robson *Memento Ossium*, the bare framework of life, providing unwavering stability.



Miya Jade Robson

Memento Ossium (2025)

Medium: Pen & Ink

Description:

Memento Ossium presents the bare framework of life, providing unwavering stability.

2



The organising team with postgraduate students, Dept. of Human Anatomy and Histology, SMU.

☠ **Walking Into Wellness: Celebrating Spring as a Department**

The Department of Anatomy and Histology at Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University marked Spring Day with a colourful wellness walk around campus, an initiative that brought colleagues together in motion, in nature, and in renewed appreciation of health and camaraderie. What began as a simple stroll quickly became a moment of collective breathing space in a busy academic year.

This walk aligns with the spirit of the University's Employee Health and Wellness Policy and Occupational Health and Safety Policy, both of which emphasise creating an environment that supports holistic wellbeing, encourages healthy lifestyle habits, and fosters a safe, supportive workplace. A campus walk embodies these principles by promoting physical activity, reducing stress, and strengthening social connection – key components of sustainable employee wellness.



Academic and technical staff from the Department of Anatomy and Histology - Sunshine, smiles, and 2.95 km conquered!

Inspired by the many stories throughout history that remind us of the power of simply putting one foot in front of the other, the department embraced the walk as a light-hearted reminder that wellness need not be complicated. Sometimes, it really is as simple as stepping outside together.

The afternoon concluded with everyone gathering for lunch, a communal moment that turned the walk into not just a wellness activity, but a shared celebration of collegiality, renewal, and the joy of welcoming a new season as a team.

This Spring Day walk reminded the department that wellness grows in the small steps we take together.



Spring has sprung, and so have our tutus!

***Contribution submitted by:
Ms Daniële Kristen***

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY (SUN)

DIVISION OF CLINICAL ANATOMY

We've had an exciting year in the Division of Clinical Anatomy and enclose just some of these highlights.

💀 World Anatomy Day

World Anatomy Day was celebrated by staff and students dressing up, attending ASSA's 6th World Anatomy Online Symposium, and participating in a colouring-in competition (organ themed, of course!).



Attendees of the World Anatomy Day celebrations and the colourful results of the colouring-in competition.

💀 Biological Anthropology Research Unit (BARU) – Annual Highlights

The Biological Anthropology Research Unit (BARU) and Victim Identification at Stellenbosch University (ViSUN) are complementary initiatives within the Division of Clinical Anatomy, at Stellenbosch University's Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences. BARU serves as a hub for research, teaching, and ethical stewardship of human skeletal collections, advancing studies in biological and forensic anthropology. ViSUN, established as BARU's applied arm, provides forensic anthropology casework and training, supporting medico-legal authorities in the analysis and identification of unknown human remains. Together, these units bridge academic research and humanitarian practice, integrating science, ethics, and education to strengthen South Africa's capacity for forensic human identification and to promote the responsible, socially engaged use of human remains in research and teaching.



The Biological Anthropology Research Unit (BARU), based at the Division of Clinical Anatomy at Stellenbosch University.

☠ Collaboration with the Wildlife Forensic Academy (WFA)

Our partnership with the Wildlife Forensic Academy (WFA) at Buffelsfontein Nature Reserve on the West Coast has continued to grow from strength to strength this year. In March, Dr Mandi Alblas and Mr Keegan Meiring attended the WFA Research Day Workshop, which brought together researchers and practitioners to share updates on ongoing projects, explore new ideas, and strengthen collaboration across the wildlife and forensic sciences.

The following day, our team hosted an exciting fingerprinting workshop for international students at the WFA, led by a fingerprint specialist from the Forensic Pathology Services, Western Cape. Participants experimented with magnetic, fluorescent, and gold powders on a variety of natural materials—including horns, scales, and leaves—demonstrating innovative approaches to wildlife crime scene investigation.

This collaboration has since expanded into taphonomy projects, based at Buffelsfontein. With ethics clearance and a TOPS permit for animal research now secured, BARU and ViSUN are supervising international student projects examining decomposition and preservation processes in natural environments. The partnership reflects our shared commitment to advancing forensic science education and applied research in both human and wildlife contexts.



Taphonomy research equipment used in research collaborations with WPA.

☠ **SACA National Conference (25–27 August 2025)**

BARU was proudly represented at the South African Cemeteries Association (SACA) National Conference in Johannesburg, where W. Bender, K. Meiring, I. Eigelaar-Meets, and A. Alblas delivered an oral presentation titled *The Silent Crisis: Unidentified Natural Deaths and Legislative Gaps in Western Cape Public Hospitals*. The conference – attended by cemetery professionals, municipal leaders, researchers, and policymakers from across the country – offered an engaging platform to discuss current challenges and innovations in burial management, memorialisation, and cemetery planning. Our participation helped highlight the often-overlooked issue of unidentified natural deaths and the urgent need for improved systems of identification and documentation in South Africa. A special thanks to SACA for fully sponsoring our team's conference fees and accommodation, making this important contribution possible.



Liané Bender presenting at the South African Cemeteries Association (SACA) National Conference in Johannesburg,

☠ Mock excavation

A joint forensic archaeological training session was conducted for the University of Western Cape (UWC) forensic dentistry and SU anthropology students at the Tygerberg Hospital premises in September 2025. The one-day mock excavation, supervised by Dr Mandi Alblas, provided hands-on experience in search, survey, and recovery methods, with strict adherence to safety and emergency protocols. The session was enriched by the valuable support of SAPS officers, Captain Briers, and Warrant Officers Stuurman and Le Roux from the Victim Identification Centre (VIC) from the Platteklouf Forensic Laboratories, who provided a realistic and operational perspective on the recovery of skeletonised human remains. The training was further supported by Dr Elysia Greenway, a Chartered Archaeologist (UK) and Postdoctoral Researcher in the VIZ.Lab. Her involvement helped bridge academic and professional practice, ensuring that students gained insight into how their theoretical learning is applied in the field. This collaborative exercise not only strengthened interdisciplinary ties but also contributed to capacity building for future excavation-style training, equipping students with the practical skills necessary for forensic recovery and analysis.



Mock excavation: the “victim” before burial, and the mock line search, in search of the buried “victims”.



Students in action, marking evidence during the practical crime scene simulation, and excavation of the buried “victim”.

☠ **Excursion to the West Coast Fossil Park and Wildlife Forensic Academy**

In October, the BARU team enjoyed an inspiring excursion to the West Coast Fossil Park and the Wildlife Forensic Academy (WFA) at Buffelsfontein Nature Reserve. The visit offered a fascinating look at how South Africa’s deep past and present-day forensic innovation connect through science, education, and preservation. At the Fossil Park, we explored the world-renowned dig site where the remains of prehistoric animals, such as sabre-toothed cats, short-necked giraffes, and giant pigs, have been remarkably preserved in the lime-rich sediments of an ancient river system. The museum exhibition showcased these extraordinary finds through immersive artistic displays, giving us a vivid sense of the region’s palaeoenvironment and its significance for understanding evolutionary change. The second part of our visit took us to the Wildlife Forensic Academy, where we toured their state-of-the-art training facilities. The WFA provides hands-on forensic training for both local and international students, simulating realistic crime scenes involving wildlife trafficking, poaching, and illegal trade.



BARU at the West Coast Fossil Park Museum, and at the Wildlife Forensic Academy (WFA) at Buffelsfontein Nature Reserve.

☠ **DRD Public Square (S4J)**

BARU actively contributed to Stellenbosch University's Public Squares: Science for Justice (S4J) initiative, a transdisciplinary research programme aimed at advancing Forensic Human Identification through collaboration across faculties, and with partners such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The project, led by Prof Kathryn Smith, Dr Mandi Alblas, and Dr Janette Verster, strengthened its research-practitioner network across Africa during the year.

BARU members, including Dr Mandi Alblas and Mr Keegan Meiring, participated in a series of Public Squares workshops, lectures, and development sessions focused on enhancing research capacity, community engagement, and international collaboration. Topics included science communication and public engagement, societal impact through transdisciplinary research, community participation in research, and co-production practices. These engagements provided valuable skills in grant writing, stakeholder engagement, and the translation of forensic science into accessible and socially responsive research. Through these activities, BARU and the S4J team strengthened their collective capacity to integrate scientific excellence with humanitarian application, advancing Stellenbosch University's commitment to Science for Justice in Africa.



BARU participating in the Public Squares initiatives.

☠ Local conferences/ symposia: 69th Annual Academic Day of the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences (20-21 August 2025)

1. Batwali, M; Meiring K; Alblas A. 2025. Regional age at death estimation using medial clavicle epiphyseal closure.
2. Fourie, E; Alblas A; Meiring, K. 2025. Sex Estimation Using Femoral Head Diameter in a Skeletal Sample from the Western Cape.



Representatives at the annual Academic Day.

☠ Workshops/ training

BARU organised a short lecture series named *Investigation into Multidisciplinary Forensic Identification Approaches* for the BARU students and other members of the Division of Clinical Anatomy to attend. The lecture series was hosted as a hybrid event in the BMRI. The presentations included:

- 23 July 2024: A presentation by Dr Susan Chandler, focusing on the use and value of teeth in forensic investigations.
- 30 July 2025: A presentation by doctoral candidate, Patricia Groenewald from UCT, focusing on the use of isotopes and isoscapes in forensics.
- 6 August 2025: Prof Kathryn Smith and Dr Elysia Greenway, from the Visual Arts Department on the Stellenbosch campus, presented a talk about facial reconstruction and the use thereof.
- 10 September 2025: Captain Marius Joubert was scheduled to present on Blood spatter and crime scene investigations; however, due to court duties, this presentation was postponed. A new date still needs to be scheduled.



BARU workshops presented in 2025.

☠ Training/ outreach presented by BARU members

1. BARU was part of various Job Shadow programmes of the Department of Biomedical Sciences, where Grade 9-11 learners are exposed to STEM careers:
 - a. 10 June 2025: the BARU team presented a hands-on workshop for The American International School in Cape Town. This formed part of the *Open Doors* initiatives organised by the Division of Medical Physiology.
 - b. 2 July 2025: the BARU team presented a workshop to 20 high school learners (Grades 10 – 12) interested in pursuing a career in scientific research as part of the Generation Science (GenS) campaign. This is organised annually by the Societal Impact Task Team within the South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC) and Stellenbosch University's Biomedical Research Institute (BMRI).



BARU engagement in the Generation Science (GenS) campaign.



- c. 9 October 2025: the BARU team presented a workshop for 20 high school learners (Grades 10 – 12) interested in pursuing a career in scientific research as part of the STEMConnect Job shadow programme. This is organised annually by BMRI Societal Impact Task Team in collaboration with the South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC) Centre for Tuberculosis, and Centre for Epidemic Response and Innovation (CERI) at Stellenbosch University's Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences.
- d. 13 October 2025: the BARU team presented a workshop for high school learners from Voorbrug Senior Secondary School, in the *Open Doors to Future Possibilities* community engagement project. During the learner visit, BARU hosted a hands-on workshop in the ossuary The *Open Doors* initiative is organised by the Division of Medical Physiology.



BARU engagement with learners interested in STEM careers.

- 2. 3 July 2025: Dr Alblas, Emma Fourie and Ronit Olivier presented a show-and-tell presentation for children aged 4 to 10 at the Tygervalley Library in Tygervalley shopping centre, featuring “Steve,” the plastic skeleton, along with various animal bones and skulls. The children enthusiastically participated by assembling a cardboard skeleton and dancing along to the “Skeleton Song”.
- 3. 11-12 July 2025: The Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences Postgraduate Open Day provided an excellent platform for prospective students to engage with experts from more than 25 academic divisions. The event showcased Honours, Masters, and Doctoral programmes across diverse fields – ranging from clinical sciences and public health to biomedical research and health systems – highlighting Stellenbosch University’s commitment to advancing healthcare through research and innovation. Attendees had the opportunity to meet academic supervisors and current postgraduate

students, receive guidance on admissions, research proposals, and funding, and tour the faculty's state-of-the-art research and teaching facilities.



BARU members having fun.

4. 1 August 2025: BARU (Dr Alblas, Ronit Olivier and Emma Fourie) was invited to the inaugural Youth Science Week @Libraries launch event, hosted by the City of Cape Town's Library and Information Services (LIS) department and Amazon. The event was at the new state-of-the-art Amazon building in Observatory. Among the invitees were tertiary institutions, private sector representatives, and non-profit organisations (including the Cape Town Science Centre). In line with the STEAM theme, these partners offered from coding and robotics workshops to science shows and career talks, all designed to engage young minds with the captivating possibilities of the STEAM fields. We showcased some careers in Anatomy for some very eager learners.



BARU at the Youth Science Week @Libraries event.

☠ Advancing patient safety through anatomical education: Filler safety guided by clinical anatomy – a practical workshop

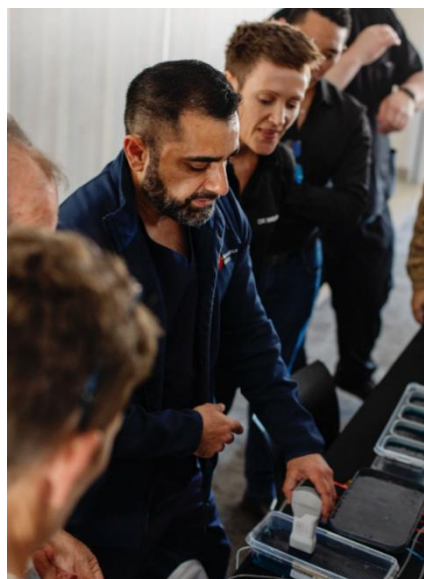
Advancing patient safety through anatomical education: Filler safety guided by clinical anatomy – a practical workshop. In October 2025, we successfully hosted a Point-of-Care Ultrasound (POCUS) training workshop for aesthetic medicine practitioners in Cape Town.

This initiative represents a practical application of clinical anatomy education to address a critical safety gap in aesthetic medical practice. The event was organised by Aesthetic Symposium Cape Town founder, Dr Barlodien Kotze (MBChB) and was co-facilitated by Dr Wade Merchant (MBChB) and Prof Hamzah Mustak (MBChB, FC Ophth (SA)).



Participants at the Filler Safety Guided by Clinical Anatomy Workshop, and a demonstration by Dr Merchant on real-time ultrasound imaging prior to the practical session of the workshop.

This workshop was designed to equip practitioners with an introduction to the practical ultrasound skills for pre-procedural vascular mapping and real-time needle guidance. Participants learned to identify key facial arteries including the facial, angular, deep temporal, labial and submental arteries, and to recognize high-risk anatomical zones where vascular complications are most likely to occur. The training emphasized the direct application of anatomical knowledge in clinical decision-making. By visualizing individual vascular anatomy before injecting, practitioners can customize their approach and depth of injection to each patient's unique anatomy rather than relying solely on surface landmarks that may not reflect underlying structures.



Prof Hamzah Mustak (left) pictured with workshop organiser, Dr Barlodien Kotze (right), demonstrating ultrasound guided injections using gelatin and psyllium husk models - a cost effective method for mimicking human tissue.

The hands-on workshop combined didactic teaching on facial vascular anatomy with practical ultrasound training on live models. Participants practiced probe positioning, vessel identification, and interpretation of ultrasound images in real clinical contexts. The course also integrated current research on anatomical variations and evidence-based injection techniques. Feedback from attendees highlighted the transformative impact of being able to "see" anatomy in real-time rather than relying on memorized landmarks. Several practitioners noted that the training fundamentally changed their approach to treatment planning and risk assessment.

This educational initiative forms part of ongoing research into POCUS applications in aesthetic medicine being conducted through the Stellenbosch University Department of Clinical Anatomy. The research investigates both the technical efficacy of ultrasound for vascular identification and practitioner and patient perceptions of this safety technology.



Workshop participant visualising the temple region excluding the anterior branch of the deep temporal artery in the standard “safe” location of injection for temple volumization

This work demonstrates the vital importance of anatomical sciences in modern medical practice, extending beyond traditional surgical applications into emerging fields where precision and safety are paramount. Cardiologists, anaesthesiologists, and emergency physicians long ago abandoned blind needle placement in favour of ultrasound guidance. Aesthetic medicine practitioners now have the same opportunity to ground their injections in anatomical reality rather than anatomical assumption - a transformation that will likely define the next era of safe, evidence-based aesthetic practice.

***Contribution submitted by:
Ms Kerri Keet***

UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG (UJ)

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN ANATOMY & PHYSIOLOGY (HAP)

🏆 Awards Day

HAP hosted its Annual Awards Day in April 2025, celebrating the top achievers in Human Anatomy and Physiology for the 2024 academic year. Award recipients were presented with Exclusive Books vouchers in recognition of their outstanding performance.



HAP Top Achievers with the Head of Department of HAP, Prof Nkomozezi.

🏆 Conference Presentation and International Workshops

Dr Ishwarkumar-Govender, Dr Jooste, and Prof Nalla delivered presentations at the 50th Annual Conference of the Anatomical Society of Southern Africa (ASSA), held in April 2025 in Muldersdrift, Johannesburg. In addition, Prof Nalla and Dr Ishwarkumar-Govender showcased their research at the XXIX International Symposium on Morphological Sciences (ISMS) in Lisbon, Portugal, in July 2025. In September 2025, Dr Jooste attended the FASE Advanced Course and Symposium on Bone Histology in Paris, France. Dr Ishwarkumar-Govender was selected to represent the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Johannesburg at the U21 Early Career Researcher (ECR) Workshop, hosted by the University of Nottingham in the United Kingdom in September 2025. The workshop, themed *Living Well Across the Life Course*, provided early career researchers with valuable

opportunities for international networking and encouraged the development of interdisciplinary collaborative research

Funding

Dr Jooste and Dr Ishwarkumar-Govender received Department of Higher Education and Training: University Capacity Development Grant (DHET UCDP) funding for 2025.

Community Engagement

In February 2025, Prof Nkomozepe, Dr Fasemore, and Dr Ishwarkumar-Govender gave Gauteng secondary school learners an exciting glimpse into a career in Anatomy at Sci-Bono Discovery Centre during Health Science Week, exploring anatomical models and a virtual reality skeleton using the Oculus Quest 2 and 3D Organon software. HAP, in partnership with the Islamic Medical Association of South Africa (IMASA), took part in an outreach event in Johannesburg CBD in April 2025. Community members received health screenings at various stations, with the Biokinetics station coordinated by HAP's Assistant Lecturer in Physiology, Mr Jalal, who was supported by a dedicated team of student and intern volunteers, all working together to serve the community. The annual HAP book-drive collected approximately 300 books, which were donated to the Johannesburg Children's Home and UJ's Gwakwani Village Project. Prof Nalla and Dr S Ishwarkumar-Govender are part of the "Greater Gwakwani Project," a Community Connect initiative that introduces school learners to STEAM and showcases the use of 3D printing in education. The project produced 3D teaching models to support the curriculum, including anatomical torso models, organs, plant and animal cells, and accompanying workbooks. Prof Nalla met with local chiefs and the principals of Hanyani Secondary School and Matatani Primary School to facilitate the hand over these resources. The initiative aims to spark learners' interest in Human Anatomy and Physiology, providing a steppingstone toward further study in the Medical and Allied Health professions.



Prof Nalla with the principal of Hanyani High School.

🦠 Staff News

Join us in congratulating Dr Jooste on her promotion to Senior Lecturer in October 2025! We also extend a warm welcome to Prof Duyilemi Ajonijebu, who joined HAP as an Associate Professor in Physiology - we look forward to the valuable contributions he will bring to the department.

***Contribution submitted by:
Dr Sundika Ishwarkumar-Govender***

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL (UKZN)

SCHOOL OF LABORATORY & MEDICAL SCIENCES, CLINICAL ANATOMY

🦴 Annual Anatomy Day celebrations 10 October 2025

Clinical Anatomy Discipline academic staff, undergraduate and postgraduate students filled the quad on UKZN's Westville campus to raise awareness about anatomy education.



Staff and students at the Anatomy Day celebrations.

🦴 Body donation memorial

The annual Inspectorate and Reverence Ceremony was held on 4 December 2025 by the Discipline of Clinical Anatomy for 22 bodies donated to UKZN for medical training and research purposes last year. Religious leaders and UKZN's Anatomy Department staff gathered at the Nelson R. Mandela Medical School in Durban to honour those who donated their bodies to the University to use in training and research by medical students and allied health science students.



Staff and religious leaders at the Inspectorate and Reverence ceremony.

Awards and accolades

Dr Pamela Pillay was awarded the Vice Chancellor's teaching certificate in leadership and collaboration, and a Teaching Advancement at Universities (TAU) Fellowship. She is also the recipient of the University Capacity Development Programme (UCDP) Funding in 2025.



Dr Pamela Pillay at the Vice Chancellor's teaching excellence awards.

UKZN's Discipline of Anatomy proudly celebrated the inauguration of Professor Lelika Lazarus as a Full Professor – a significant milestone in her 28-year journey of academic excellence, innovation, and mentorship.



Prof Lelika Lazarus celebrating her inauguration as Full Professor.

Dr Ntombifuthi Ngubane was nominated as the Language Champion for the Discipline of Clinical Anatomy. She is also the recipient of the University Capacity Development Programme (UCDP) Seed Funding in 2025. These recognitions support her ongoing work in teaching, research and academic development.



Dr Ntombifuthi Ngubane was nominated as Language Champion for the Discipline of Clinical Anatomy.

🦴 New appointments

We are happy to announce the appointment of Ms Chantel Jughoo as a lecturer, and Dr Okiki Aladeyelu as a senior lecturer in the Discipline of Clinical Anatomy.

***Contribution submitted by:
Dr Pamela Pillay***

UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA (UNAM)

DEPARTMENT OF ANATOMY

The Division of Anatomy at the University of Namibia (UNAM) is making a profound impact on the academic and scientific community, demonstrating that size is no barrier to excellence. Despite its small team of only seven staff members, the Division has showcased remarkable productivity, underpinned by cutting-edge and diverse expertise.

The dynamic team has collectively secured eleven peer-reviewed publications this year alone, a significant achievement for a division of this size. Furthermore, they have shared their findings on international platforms, delivering six conference presentations and enhancing UNAM's visibility.

Dr Albertina Shatri's efforts have been instrumental in securing critical funding, including a prestigious international grant through the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB), alongside four local seed corn grants from UNAM. This funding is fuelling pioneering projects, notably those integrating indigenous knowledge with advanced nanotechnology for drug development.

2025 was also marked by Senate approval of the newly transformed postgraduate curricula in Anatomy – MPhil and DPhil in Biomedical Sciences (Anatomy). The Division currently has three local and international PhD candidates.

UNAM will proudly host ASSA 2026. The conference will be held coastal setting of Swakopmund, Namibia, from 12 – 15 April 2026, at the Swakopmund Plaza Hotel.

The central theme is *Anatomy for All*, and will focus on ways to bring anatomical knowledge to a wider audience. *Anatomy for All* shifts this focus to active learning and ethical engagement. We encourage participation from every field, including clinical anatomy, cell biology, histology, neurosciences, developmental biology, orofacial biology, physical

anthropology, palaeoanthropology, and veterinary sciences. *Anatomy for All* also aims to capture anatomical sciences across all scientific fields.

Beyond the engaging scientific programme, we envision this conference as a prime opportunity to connect socially and network with peers from around the world, all set against the backdrop where the Swakop River meets the Atlantic Ocean.

For more information, registration, and abstract submissions, visit the conference website at: <https://assa2026.blogspot.com/>

The poster for the ASSA Conference 2026 features a dark blue background. On the left, the text 'ASSA' is written in large, orange, sans-serif capital letters. Below it, in smaller white text, is 'Anatomical Society of Southern Africa'. This is followed by 'CONFERENCE 2026' in orange, '12 to 15 April' in white, and 'Swakopmund - Namibia' in orange. Below this, the word 'Registration:' is in white, followed by '20 October 2025 - 20 March 2026' in white. Then 'Call For Abstracts:' is in white, followed by '27 October 2025 - 28 February 2026' in white. A vertical orange line separates this text from the right side. On the right, there is a circular illustration of a human skull. Several hands of different skin tones (brown, tan, grey) are shown holding and touching the skull. Below the illustration, the text 'Anatomy for All' is in orange, and 'Collaboration Meets Community' is in white. At the bottom of the poster, a solid orange banner contains the text '51st Annual Anatomical Society of Southern Africa Conference' in white.

Contribution submitted by:
Dr Adele Du Plessis

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA (UP)

DEPARTMENT OF ANATOMY



We are sad to announce the passing of our colleague and friend, Yvette Scholtz. Yvette was a Senior Technical Assistant in the Department of Anatomy and a dedicated member of the Forensic Anthropology Research Centre at the University of Pretoria. She played a pivotal role in the lives of undergraduate students in the BSc Medical Sciences programme.

She loved two things almost as much as the people in her life: coffee and dogs. She was always up for a chat, whether it was a deep conversation or just a quick laugh in passing. Her wit was razor-sharp, and her sense of humour could brighten even the dullest day, with a laugh that could be heard echoing down the hallway. Yvette's skill, dedication, and kindness touched everyone she worked with. Her passion for her work and her unwavering support for her colleagues will be remembered and cherished. Our department is certainly a lot less colourful without her.

Our thoughts are with her family, friends, and all who knew her. She will be deeply missed.

🦴 News in the Department

We extend our heartfelt congratulations to Prof Megan Bester, who has retired after many years of dedicated service to our department, and to the broader scientific community. Prof Bester has been a cornerstone of our cell biology program, bringing exceptional expertise, curiosity, and mentorship to generations of students and colleagues. As she enters this new chapter, we celebrate her accomplishments with deep gratitude and offer our warmest wishes for a fulfilling and well-deserved retirement. She leaves behind a legacy of scientific excellence and a community deeply enriched by her presence.

We are also delighted to welcome Dr Diana Pillay, who joins our department as a Senior Lecturer in Cell Biology, and Prof Brenda de Gama, appointed as an Associate Professor in Clinical Anatomy. Their expertise broadens our academic and research strengths, and we look forward to the collaboration, innovation, and growth their contributions will bring.

🦴 Excellence in research



Congratulations to Prof Ericka L'Abbé, Prof Nanette Oberholzer, Prof André Uys, and Dr Lané Prigge for their outstanding accomplishments at the University of Pretoria's 25th Annual Academic Achievers' Awards.

University of Pretoria's 25th Annual Academic Achievers' Awards

Faculty of Health Sciences researchers were recognised for their outstanding accomplishments at the University of Pretoria's 25th Annual Academic Achievers' Awards, held on 23 October 2025. Among the recipients of the Exceptional Academic Achievers Award were Prof Ericka L'Abbé, Prof Nanette Oberholzer, Prof André Uys, and Dr Lané Prigge, who were honoured for their significant contributions to anatomy, impactful research, and exemplary postgraduate mentorship. We are incredibly proud of their achievements and grateful for the excellence they bring to our faculty.

2025 Senate Conference Research Project Awards

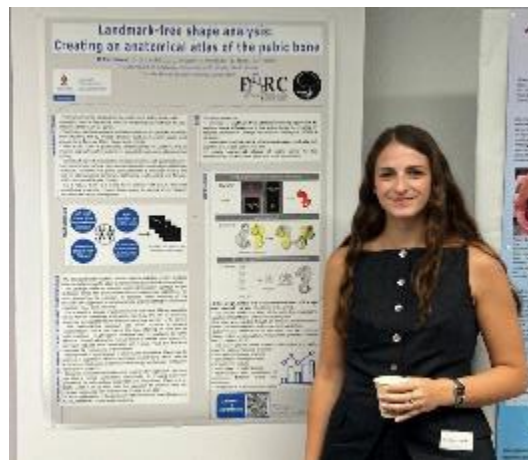
The University of Pretoria Cochlear Implant Research Interest Group was awarded 3rd place at the 2025 Senate Conference Research Project Awards. Dr René Baron, in collaboration with a multidisciplinary team from the Faculty of Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology (EBIT) and the Department of Speech-language Pathology, received the R100 000 prize for their innovative project. This transdisciplinary initiative brings together specialists in engineering, audiology, and anatomy to address disparities in access to cochlear implants and related care for individuals with severe to profound hearing loss in South Africa. The project focuses on maximising the auditory benefit for cochlear implant recipients by understanding, anticipating, and managing non-auditory stimulation, thereby improving affordability, ensuring sustainability, and shaping policies that support equitable hearing healthcare. We are very proud of Dr Baron and the team for this outstanding achievement and their contribution to advancing equitable hearing care.



The Cochlear Implant Research Interest Group at the 2025 Senate Conference Research Project Awards. From left to right: Dr Werner Badenhorst, Prof Johan Hanekom, Prof Tania Hanekom, Prof Francis Peterson (UP Vice-chancellor), Dr René Baron, and Prof Talita le Roux.

☠ Conference attendance

PhD student Dominika Carikova, from the Forensic Anthropology Research Centre, proudly represented our department at two international conferences this year. She delivered an oral presentation titled *Landmark-Free Shape Analysis: Creating an Anatomical Atlas of the Pubic Bone* at the Spring Forensic Science Symposium 2025 in Leuven, Belgium, hosted by the Royal Belgian Society of Legal Medicine (KBGGG—SRMLB). Dominika also presented a scientific poster with the same title at the Forensic Anthropology Society of Europe (FASE) 2025 Symposium in Paris, France. Her poster received the Best Poster Presentation Award, a remarkable achievement that highlights the quality and impact of her work.



Dominika Carikova, a PhD student with FARC, with her award-winning poster at the Forensic Anthropology Society of Europe (FASE) 2025 Symposium in Paris, France.

We are pleased to congratulate Dr Gerda Venter, who received 1st Prize: The Hanno Boon Award for the Best Oral Presentation in Medical Education at the 50th Annual Conference of the Anatomical Society of Southern Africa. Her winning presentation was titled *Perceptions and Attitudes of Undergraduate Health Care Students Towards Neuroanatomy*. This achievement reflects Dr Venter's dedication to advancing anatomy education and her valuable contributions to teaching and learning within the health sciences.



Dr Gerda Venter in action at the 50th Annual ASSA conference.

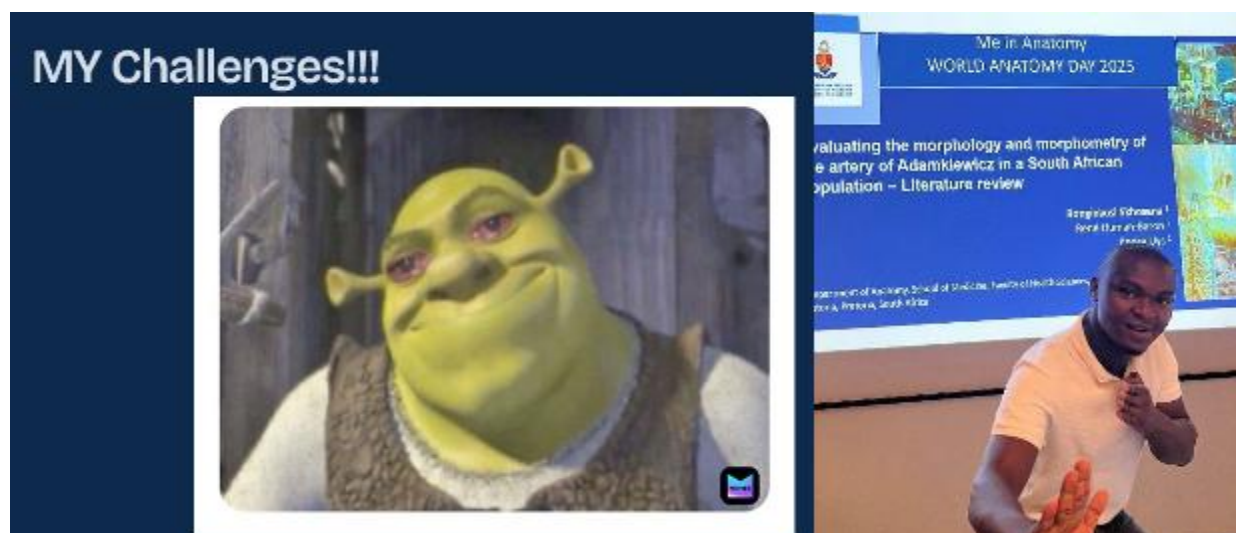
☠ University of Pretoria World Anatomy Day 2025

The Department of Anatomy at the University of Pretoria celebrated World Anatomy Day on the 21st of October under the theme *Me in Anatomy*. The event offered a heartfelt, and humorous, glimpse into the personal and academic journeys of postgraduate students across honours, master's, and PhD levels.



Contributions to the UP World Anatomy Day event.

Presentations ranged from research protocols to nearly completed projects, and personal reflections, each capturing a unique perspective on life in anatomy. Some students expressed their experiences through creative artworks and evocative poems, while others used videos to take the audience on a journey through their haunted, yet rewarding, postgraduate research experience. The challenges faced along the way were humorously portrayed, with memorable references to Shrek and insightful reflections on growth and character development.



Dealing with challenges in the postgraduate journey with a sense of humour.

Topics explored included aspects such as the blood supply of the spinal cord, venous drainage of the brain, the morphology of midline cerebral structures, and nerves throughout the body. Presenters showcased their work using various modalities, ranging from osteological specimens to cadaveric samples, and radiographical scans, illustrating the depth and diversity of anatomical exploration.



Artwork and attendees of the UP World Anatomy Day *Me in Anatomy* event.

Attended by postgraduate students and staff, the event was filled with laughter, empathy, and inspiration. Through honest storytelling and creative expression, *Me in Anatomy* reminded everyone that the pursuit of anatomy is not only a scientific journey but also a deeply human one.

**Contribution submitted by:
Dr Lané Prigge; Dr Leandi Liebenberg**

UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE (UFS)

DEPARTMENT OF BASIC MEDICAL SCIENCES (BMS)

As is becoming the norm, this year was a very busy one at the University of the Free State (UFS), with several conferences, workshops and engaged scholarship events taking place to keep our staff constantly running. Fortunately, there were also a few opportunities to spend time together as a department and to celebrate some momentous personal and professional achievements.

Staff matters

Forensic anthropologist in the Department, Dr Petra Maass, was promoted to the position of Associate Professor. We congratulate her on this great achievement and cannot wait to see where this will lead her.

Fellow staff members Ms Rethabile Masiu and Ms Sue Roux said goodbye to the departmental family at the end of September this year. We wish the both of them all of the best for their future endeavours.

We bid farewell to our Professional Officer, Mr Ezra Anirudh, as we welcome the new lecturer, Mr Ezra Anirudh who will begin in January 2026. We wish him everything of the best in his new position as an academic in the Department.



Prof C Viljoen (Head School of Biomedical Sciences), Prof H Brits, Dr S van Zyl (HoD Department of Basic Medical Sciences), Dr Beynon Abrahams (promoted to senior lecturer), Prof Muriel Meiring, and A/Prof Petra Maass at the staff promotion function.

☠ Conferences and other presentations

The department was well represented at the 56th annual UFS Faculty of Health Sciences Research Forum, with research related to anatomy and anthropology being presented by Mr Mojalefa Nkoi, Mr Ezra Anirudh, and A/Prof Petra Maass. A/Prof Maass was awarded the prize for the Best Laboratory Paper in the Senior category for her presentation entitled *Evaluating the Accuracy of Univariate Sex Estimation of the Scapula in a Free State Skeletal Sample* – this is the second time she has won this award at the annual forum.

The presentations from the anatomy staff were:

- *An Anatomical Description of the Coeliac Trunk in a Free State Cadaveric Sample* (Paper). Presenter: M Nkoi; Collaborators: Ms S Govender, A/Prof P Maass, Dr H Potgieter.
- *Evaluating The Accuracy of Univariate Sex Estimation of the Scapula in a Free State Skeletal Sample* (Paper). Presenter: A/Prof P Maass; Collaborators: Ms A Smal, Mr E Anirudh.
- *Long Story Short: A Cadaveric Case Report of a Short Gastrointestinal Tract* (Poster). Presenter: Mr E Anirudh; Collaborators: Mr G van Zyl, A/Prof P Maass.



Presenters from the Department of Basic Medical Sciences at the Annual Faculty of Health Sciences Research Forum – Mr Nkoi, Mr Anirudh, A/Prof Maass, and Dr De Wet

In the final stretches of completing his Masters thesis, Mr Mojalefa Nkoi also managed to present some of his preliminary results at both the 6th World Anatomy Day Online Symposium, hosted by the Anatomical Society of Southern Africa, as well as at the UFS Faculty of Health Sciences Three-Minute Thesis (3MT) competition.



Mr M Nkoi, ready to present the preliminary results of his Masters thesis at the UFS Faculty of Health Sciences 3MT competition.

🦴 UFS Open Day 2025

On 10 May, the UFS welcomed prospective students to visit the campus and interact with staff in various programmes. Mr Ezra Anirudh coordinated the departmental representation, which incorporated the Faculties of Health Sciences and Natural and Agricultural Sciences. Postgraduate coordinators Dr Roné Vorster-De Wet and A/Prof Petra Maass were there to provide prospective students with information about the physiology and anatomy modules, and Ms Arishka Kalicharan assisted with students about the MBChB programme.



UFS Open day event – Mr Ezra Anirudh, Dr Karen Ehlers and A/Prof Maass representing the BSc Anatomy stream, Dr Roné De Wet representing the BSc Physiology stream, and Ms Arishka Kalicharan representing the Department at the Health Sciences Faculty engagement.

🦴 Workshops presented

The forensic anthropology team hosted the forensic archaeology workshops for second-year students in the BSc Forensic Sciences programme. This year, the workshops were expanded to run from February to March and included a week of Bare Bones Osteology, a week of Introduction to Forensic Osteoarchaeology & Excavation – Theory & Practice, and a new session Forensic Anthropology: A South African medicolegal perspective. Under the guidance of A/Prof Petra Maass, staff members Mr Ezra Anirudh, Mr Mojalefa Nkoi and postgrad students Mrs Daniëlle Nkosi, Ms Charlize Saayman, Ms Molebogeng Moyo, and Ms Mpho Sekhu taught students how to identify the bones of the human skeleton, and how skeletal remains should be recovered at a forensic scene.



A/Prof Maass, Mr Anirudh, and postgraduate students presenting the practical components of the annual forensic anthropology workshops with second-year Forensic Sciences students.

A forensic excavation exercise was also presented by A/Prof Petra Maass to students in the third year BSc Biological Anthropology module, with the assistance of Ms Rethabile Masiu, Mr Mojalefa Nkoi, and Mr Ezra Anirudh.



Third year BSc students in the Biological Anthropology module excavating a skeleton as part of their forensic training.

☠ **Community engagement and engaged scholarship**

The department took part in the CrazySox4Docs initiative to raise awareness for mental wellbeing of health care professionals. A video message with photos of staff and students wearing their weird and funky socks in support of the initiative was on display in the faculty during the month of June.



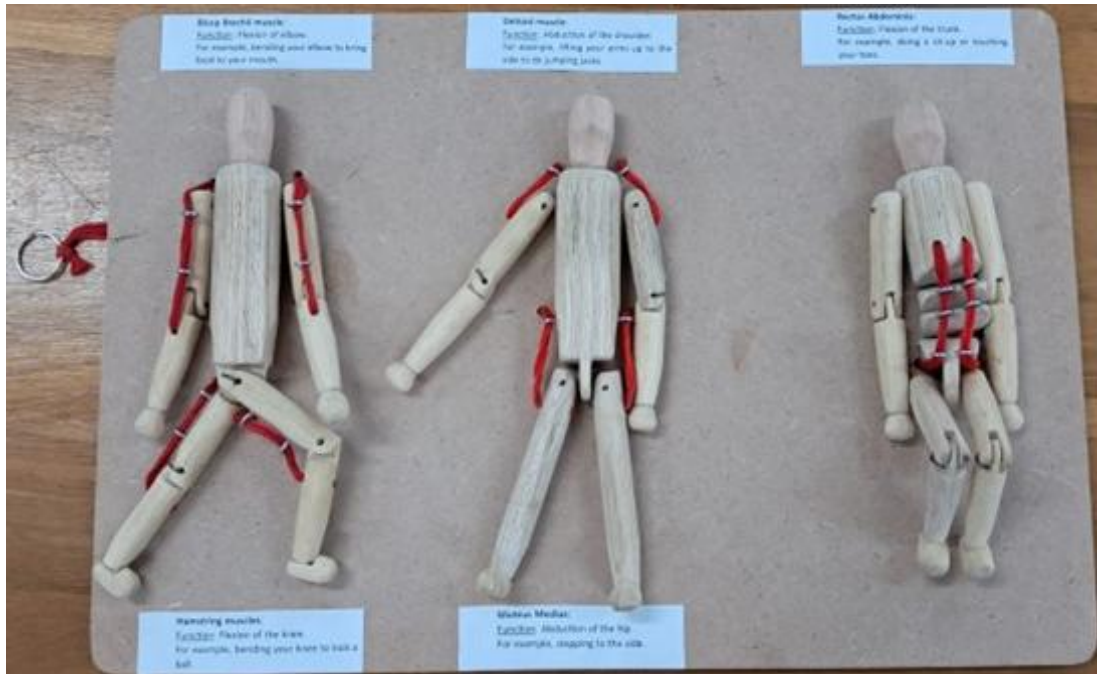
Screen capture of the Department of Basic Medical Sciences video in support of the CrazySox4Docs initiative.

The annual Eskom Expo for Young Scientists: Regional Competition was held on 1 and 2 August at the Central University of Technology (CUT) in Bloemfontein. Dr Roné Vorster-De Wet acted as judging coordinator, and A/Prof Petra Maass, Dr Mada Ferreira, and Ms Arishka Kalicharan acted as judges and theme convenors.

A/Prof Petra Maass presented a talk entitled *Free State Forensic Anthropology: Beyond the Pieces* to the 3 June academic meeting of the Department of Forensic Medicine & Pathology, University of the Witwatersrand.

In celebration of World Anatomy Day on 15 October, the department hosted an art competition, coordinated by Mr Ezra Anirudh, in which students from anatomy courses in

the Faculty of Health Sciences could partake. Students submitted various different types of art such as mosaics, clay models, and paper mâché sculptures, and paintings. The overall winner was Occupational Therapy/ Physiotherapy student Sharnell Muller, who carved beautiful wooden figures and used strings and hooks to demonstrate different body movements winning her the prize which included a tablet sponsored by BioSmart.



The overall winner of the World Anatomy Day Art Competition, submitted by OT/Phys student Sharnell Muller



Other World Anatomy Day art competition finalists.

☠ 2025 Publications

Singh AJ, Anirudh EE, Lazarus L. Topographical anatomy of the vermiform appendix within a select adult and foetal South African population (2025), European Journal of Anatomy, 29(1), pp. 71–82. <https://doi.org/10.52083/SSOO1903>

☠ Some photos from the year that was



BMS HOD, Dr Sanet van Zyl, with some of the first-year medical students at the official White Coat Ceremony.



Anatomy honours students – Charlize Saayman, Mpho Sekhu and Molebogeng Moyo – happy to be done with their final results presentations for the year.



BMS staff having fun at the year-end function held in November at Be Human near Bloemfontein.

***Contribution submitted by:
Mr Ezra Anirudh
Photos contributed by:
Dr S van Zyl, A/Prof P Maass, Mr E Anirudh & Mr M Nkoi***

UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE (UWC)

DEPARTMENT OF MEDICAL BIOSCIENCES

☠ UWC celebrates World Anatomy Day with a focus on innovation

The Anatomy unit in the Department of Medical Biosciences marked World Anatomy Day on Thursday, 16 October 2025, with an engaging programme that bridged traditional anatomical studies with cutting-edge innovations in the field. Organised by Dr BC Langa and Prof CS Opuwari, the celebration brought together students, staff, and collaborators for a day of learning and interactive exploration. In his welcome address, Head of Department Prof Oelofse emphasised that the day honours the legacy of Andreas Vesalius while recognising Anatomy's continuing vital role across science, medicine, education, and art.



HOD Prof Oelofse and attendees of the World Anatomy Day event.

The event featured two compelling plenary talks. Prof Onyemachi O. Azu presented on *Handling of Corpses During Mass Disaster*, while Dr Sahar Abdul-Rasool presented *Immortalizing the Mortals – Providing Spectacular Anatomy Through Plastination*.



Prof Azu and Dr Abdul-Rasool presenting plenary talks at the World Anatomy Day event.

Honours student Ms. Mpho Mosia also captivated attendees with an anatomy-themed poem authored by Mr Ernest Maboza:

This Man was a Taxi Driver – The Marvels of Anatomy
By: EJM Maboza

On his axis,
His skull rocked up and down on its occipital condyles.
Whether to locate his pedals or find the ignition.
On the dens of his atlas around the axis,
His skull swiveled in observation now dextrally then sinistrally.

His rib cage heaved up and down in anticipation
His intercostal muscles contracting and extending
His lung inflating and deflating with the diaphragm
The systole and diastole of his heart doing overtime
He has to be the first in line.

In dexterity, his scapula, clavicle and humerus in harmony,
His arms adducting and abducting efficiently from his body.
His elbow joint on the olecranon fossa similarly in accord.
With every extension and flexion of the lower arm,
There is nothing funny about his funny bone.

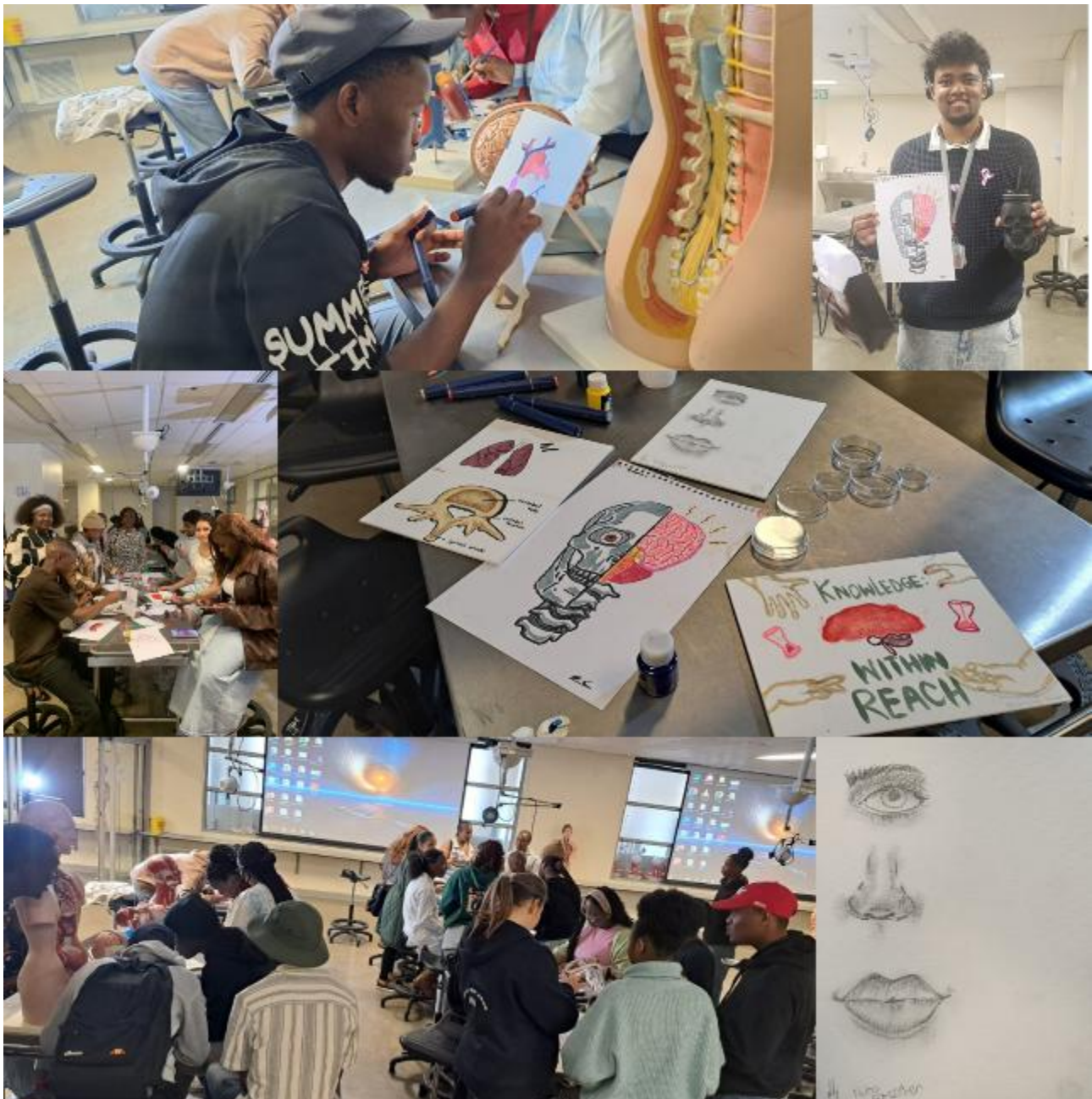


Changing gears and turning the steering here and there,
The extensors and flexors doing their jobs.
Digits curling in opposition over the knob, the wheel and all.
His feet in dorsiflexion and plantarflexion, in easing off and acceleration.
'Tis Anatomy in Action!

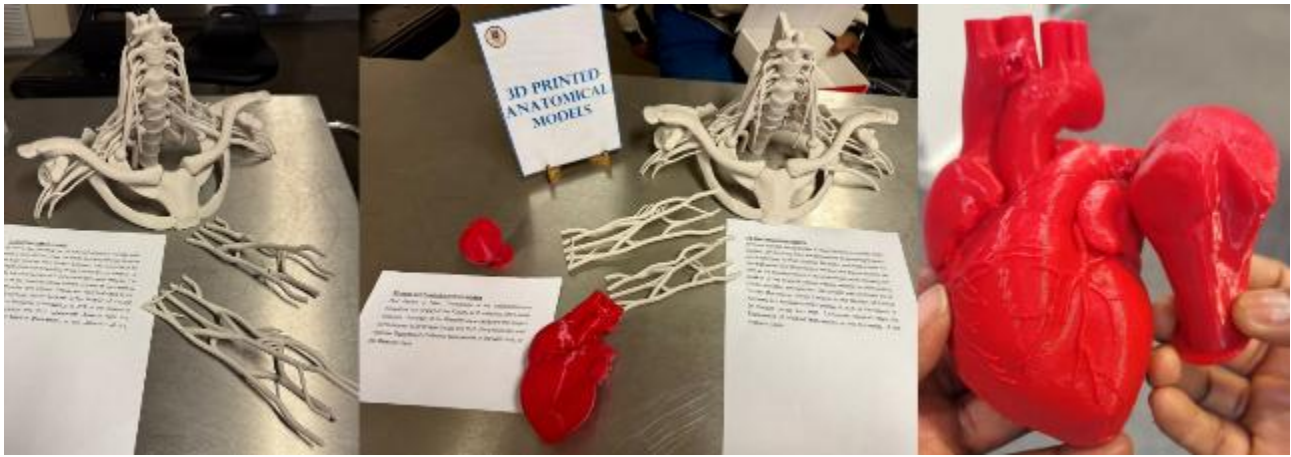
His senses acutely honed,
Eyes constantly scanning the surroundings,
His lateral rectus and the medial rectus in sync.
His vestibulocochlear ready trained to hear.
"Is that burning smell from my taxi?" His olfactory nerve sharpens.

A crunch in his stomach. Missed that by a whisker!
His rectus abdominis and external rectus clench.
Piloerection! Sweat beads on his forehead.
All cranial nerves are fired
This man used all his Anatomy in his trade.

Participants engaged with state-of-the-art 3D printed anatomical models, including a humeral head, heart, and brachial plexus and created their own anatomy-themed artwork through drawing and painting. Educational quizzes facilitated by Anatomy staff and postgraduate students added to the interactive experience. Winners of the artwork competition received prizes generously donated by Dr Samantha Caincross. The celebration also featured an immersive virtual reality experience, with Nathier Rhoda guiding attendees through anatomical structures using Primal Pictures technology.



Anatomy artwork session at the World Anatomy Day event.



3D printed anatomical models on display.



Attendees engaging with the team from Primal Pictures.

The event showcased remarkable inter-institutional and inter-faculty collaboration. The 3D brachial plexus model was collaboratively designed and printed by Dr Steve Randall, Mr Liam McEvoy, and Prof Sudesh Sivarasu from UCT's Biomedical Engineering Division, facilitated by Dr Kentse Mpolokeng, Senior Lecturer in the Division of Clinical Anatomy and Biological Anthropology at UCT. Prof Gérard C. Filies, Chairperson of the Interprofessional Education Unit (IPEU) in the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences at UWC, designed and printed the 3D humeral head and heart models, demonstrating the power of collaborative innovation in anatomical education. The successful celebration highlighted the Department's commitment to advancing anatomical sciences through both traditional excellence and modern technology.

Other select photos of the event:



**Contribution submitted by:
Prof CS Opuwari**

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND (WITS)

DEPARTMENT OF ANATOMICAL SCIENCES

🦴 Conferences

Celebrating 50 Years of Anatomical Excellence: The 2025 ASSA Annual Conference

The Anatomical Society of Southern Africa (ASSA) proudly celebrated its 50th Annual Conference this year, a landmark moment for the regional anatomical community. Hosted by the Department of Anatomical Sciences within the School of Biomedical Sciences, Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. The event delivered an inspiring blend of scientific innovation, collegiality, and celebration. Glenburn Lodge in Muldersdrift provided an idyllic setting, allowing delegates to immerse themselves in both scholarship and the surrounding natural beauty.

This year's conference embraced the forward-looking theme *Anatomy Intelligence: Using Artificial Intelligence in Anatomical Sciences*. The theme sparked lively discussions and set the tone for a conference that looked confidently toward the future.

Alongside the scientific sessions – featuring dynamic keynote addresses, oral and poster presentations spanning education, clinical anatomy, forensic anthropology and cellular biology, to name a few – the meeting also marked a significant leadership transition. Delegates bid a heartfelt farewell to outgoing ASSA President Prof Albert van Schoor, whose tenure was characterised by steady guidance, strong advocacy for anatomical sciences, and unwavering dedication to the Society including navigating the Society during the global Covid-19 pandemic. His contributions were warmly acknowledged throughout the meeting.

Stepping into the role of President, Prof Desire Brits was welcomed with enthusiasm. Prof Brits brings a wealth of experience, unwavering dedication to anatomical sciences, and a deep commitment to the Society. Her leadership marks an exciting new chapter for ASSA, and we are confident that the Society is in excellent hands.

While the conference celebrated academic excellence, it also provided much-needed opportunities for fun and community building. Delegates enjoyed a lively games night, spirited rounds of conference bingo, and plenty of camaraderie in-between sessions. These social moments highlighted the sense of connection and belonging that continues to define the ASSA community, even as the discipline rapidly evolves.

As ASSA reflects on 50 years of growth and achievement, the 2025 conference stands out as a vibrant blend of tradition, innovation, and collective optimism. Looking ahead, the Society remains committed to nurturing excellence in anatomical sciences and embracing the emerging tools that will shape the next fifty years. The 51st conference will be hosted by the University of Namibia in 2026.

50th Annual ASSA Conference

Two emerging researchers proudly represented the department at the 50th Annual ASSA Conference with outstanding oral presentations.

Tamara Lottering presented her work titled *From Fractures to Impressions: Distinguishing Perimortem and Postmortem Screwdriver-Induced Trauma Using a Porcine Model*. Her study offered valuable insight into trauma interpretation, contributing to the growing body of forensic anatomical research.



Ms Tamara Lottering presenting a portion of her PhD at the ASSA conference.

Boikano Morele delivered an oral presentation titled *Morphological Sex Estimation of the Cranium and Pelvis from Low-Dose X-Ray Scans – An Exploratory Study*. His work highlighted the potential of low-dose imaging techniques in forensic and anatomical identification.



Mr. Boikano Morele presenting his MSc Medicine research report at the ASSA 2025 conference, on the feasibility and repeatability of morphological sex estimation of the cranium and pelvis from low dose-ray scans of adult individuals of European ancestry.

European Academy of Forensic Science (EAFS) 2025

Dr Zuzana Obertová, Prof Brits (Wits) and Dr Anja Petaros from the Forensic Anthropology Society of Europe (FASE), organised a workshop entitled *Finding and Recognizing Human Bones in a Crime Scene: A Hands-On Workshop* by the Forensic Anthropology Society of Europe (FASE), presented at the European Academy of Forensic Science (EAFS) on 26 May 2025. During the workshop, Prof Brits contributed pre-recorded lectures related to distinguishing human from non-human bone and taphonomy.



View of the Convention Centre Dublin where the EAFS 2025 conference took place. Tamara Lottering also attended the European Academy of Forensic Science (EAFS 2025) Conference hosted in Dublin, Ireland in May 2025. On the first day, she participated in the

abovementioned half-day workshop hosted by FASE. Attendees included forensic pathologists, law enforcement officers, crime scene investigators and forensic science students. The workshop was highly engaging, with practical exercises reinforcing the theoretical concepts covered in the lectures. One activity involved examining objects to determine whether they were bone. These objects ranged from human and bird bone to sticks, and even a piece of a tennis ball, making the session both challenging and insightful. Participants left with new knowledge and practical skills applicable to real-world scenarios. On the second day of the conference, Tamara delivered an oral presentation titled *Sharp Force, Sharp Focus: Comparing the Bone Characteristics in Perimortem and Postmortem Stabbing in a Sus Scrofa Domesticus Sample*.



Ms Tamara Lottering presenting her oral presentation at the European Academy of Forensic Science (EAFS 2025) Conference.

VIII All-Russian Scientific and Practical Conference

Prof Desiré Brits was invited by the Regional Delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) for the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus to present at the VIII All-Russian Scientific and Practical Conference entitled *December Readings on Forensic Medicine at the Russian State University of Peoples Friendship: Current Issues of Forensic Medicine and Medical Criminalistics* (20 December 2024, Moscow, Russia). During this visit she also had an opportunity to engage with various forensic specialists from Moscow State University, Gerasimov Anthropological Laboratory of the Institute of

Anthropology and Ethnology of the Russian Academy of Sciences, and the Department of Forensic Medicine of the Russian Research Medical University. She was also subsequently invited as an online panellist for the 13th St. Petersburg International Legal Forum (Russia), hosted by the Forensic Science for the Justice System of the Future from 19-21 May 2025.



Prof D Brits with a certificate of attendance for the VIII All-Russian Scientific and Practical Conference (December 2024)

In addition, Mr Boikano Morele was also invited by the Regional Delegation of the ICRC for the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus to do a pre-recorded video PowerPoint presentation entitled *Morphological Sex Estimation of the Cranium and Pelvis from Low Dose X-Ray Scans*, co-authored by Ms Tamara Lottering and Prof Desiré Brits, for the Inter-Regional Thanatoradiology Society Conference, held on 9-10 October 2025.

💀 Workshops & Teaching

Prof Brits, Director of the Human Variation and Identification Research Unit (HVIRU), organized a Sharp Force Trauma workshop (1-3 July 2025), with funding from her NRF Thuthuka grant. She invited Dr Christopher Rainwater, a certified Forensic Anthropologist and Senior Forensic Anthropologist for the Tarrant County Medical Examiner's Office. The workshop was attended by academic staff and students, as well as forensic practitioners, and included lectures on various topics associated with sharp force trauma with case studies and very engaging hands-on practicals.



Dr Rainwater and Prof Brits, during a visit to the Sterkfontein Caves

Prof Brits, in collaboration with Dr Sam (Skalungi) Kalungi from Mulago National Referral Hospital, Uganda and Dr Stacey Simons (MD, Forensic Pathologist, USA) received funding from the Humanitarian and Human Rights Resource Centre (HHRRC), American Academy of Forensic Sciences (AAFS) (funded by the Forensic Sciences Foundation). This funding was for a project aimed at enabling forensic practitioners in Uganda to assess human skeletal remains to aid in the identification of unknown decedents through forensic anthropology. It included a free online lecture series, which was opened to all African (and other forensic practitioners and pathologists, with a total of 466 registered attendees. Lectures were presented by staff from the Human Variation and Identification Research Unit (HVIRU), University of the Witwatersrand and the University of Pretoria, as well as certified forensic anthropologist from the AAFS and the FASE. The online lecture series was followed by in-person practicals at the Mulago National Referral Hospital, Kampala, Uganda which were attended by individuals from Uganda, Sudan and Somalia.



Attendees of the in-person Forensic Anthropology practical series in Kampala, Uganda

Prof Desiré Brits was also invited by the Forensic team of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Sudan to facilitate forensic anthropology teaching to medical and forensic doctors (31 October – 22 November 2025). The workshop was attended by participants from Port Sudan, Atbara and Khartoum, and included lectures on forensic archaeology and elements of the biological profile to contribute towards the recovery and identification of decedents. This workshop was organized as part of the ICRC Reburial Project in Khartoum to ensure the humanitarian treatment of human remains and to strengthen national capacity in managing the dead, as a key step toward providing answers to the families of the missing.



Prof Brits at the ICRC Delegation in Port Sudan, Sudan (November 2025)

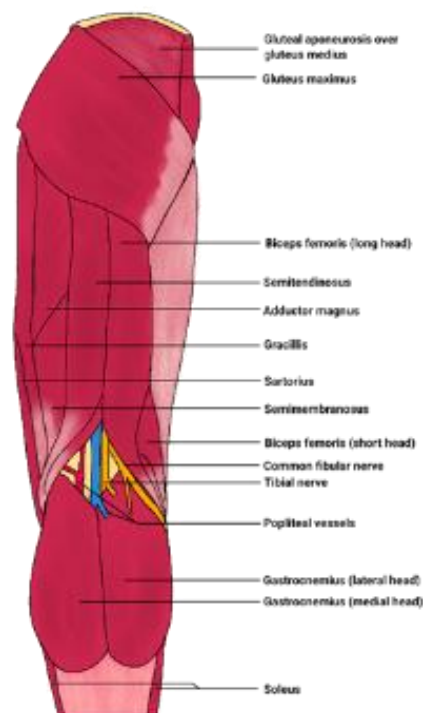
Facial Identification Scientific Working Group (FISWG)

The Facial Identification Scientific Working Group (FISWG) develops consensus standards, guidelines, and best practices for the discipline of image-based comparisons of human facial features, provides recommendations for research development activities, and advances the state of the science in an ethical manner. Facial identification has been used in government and law enforcement applications for decades. The widespread use of facial images for scientific analysis and automated facial recognition systems both in law enforcement and the private sector is more recent. For over a decade, FISWG has been a leader in gathering and disseminating accurate information regarding the proper application of facial identification and facial recognition methodologies and technologies. With over 50 different law enforcement agencies, intelligence agencies, and private industry from across the world, subject matter experts in the facial identification-related disciplines meet twice annually. Dr Nicholas Bacci was in attendance as an associate member to aid in policy development in facial image comparison, representing facial identification from South Africa.



In-person policy writing meeting of the Facial Identification Scientific Working Group (FISWG) meeting in June 2025 at Toronto, Canada.

Artwork



Submission by Sean Tempest. Sean kindly shared digital versions of one of their original anatomical drawings used in dissection teaching. Their detailed illustrations continue to enrich student learning, offering clear visual guidance and a deeper appreciation for anatomical structure and form.

***Contribution submitted by:
Dr Illke Malungo***

UPCOMING EVENTS



**Congress of the International
Federation of Associations
of Anatomists 2026**

**Anatomy for Everyone | 13–16 August
Melbourne Convention & Exhibition Centre**

The 2026 IFAA congress meeting will be held in Melbourne, Australia, from 13 to 16 August 2026. The event will be hosted by the Australian and New Zealand Association of Clinical Anatomists (ANZACA).

Early-bird registration is already open, and will close on 10 April 2026, after which standard registration rates will apply. The call for abstracts is also open, with the deadline for submission – 14 February 2026 – fast approaching. For more information about registration, travel arrangements, and funding opportunities, visit the IFAA 2026 website:

<https://ifaa2026.org/en-AU>

Remember to participate in the Koala Competition by submitting a photograph of yourself with a koala toy or printed image in a fun, creative, exotic, or interesting location in your home country. Winners will receive a Full Conference Registration. For a bit of inspiration and more information, check early submissions at: <https://ifaa2026.org/en-AU/pages/destination/koala-competition>



ANZACA
AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND
ASSOCIATION OF CLINICAL ANATOMISTS



ASSA

Anatomical Society of Southern Africa

CONFERENCE 2026

12 to 15 April

Swakopmund - Namibia

Registration:

20 October 2025 - 20 March 2026

Call For Abstracts:

27 October 2025 - 28 February 2026



Anatomy for All
Collaboration Meets Community

51st Annual Anatomical Society of Southern Africa Conference

MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

Dear colleagues and friends,

We have come to the end of another busy year. The pages of this newsletter reflect the hard work, achievements, and happy times experiences in the ASSA universe. We reflect cheerfully on seeing friends and colleagues at conferences like the amazing one hosted by the University of the Witwatersrand at Muldersdrift in April – thank you to the local organizing committee for a job well done. This year, the ASSA presidency passed from Prof Albert van Schoor, on to Prof Desiré Brits. Thank you to Prof Van Schoor for the tremendous work he has done during his time as President – it is deeply appreciated!



All the best to Prof Brits for the duration of her time as President – we look forward to seeing where the Society will grow to in the years to come!

We also celebrate each other's achievements in all different sizes and shapes – professionally and personally. We remember fondly those we had to sadly say goodbye to during the year. Thank you to each of the ASSA members for their diligence in building the anatomical field in southern Africa, often under difficult circumstances. And a special welcome to the correspondents that submitted the reports from each institution to share with the broader ASSA community.

We look forward to the year ahead. May 2026 be even more productive and successful for us all. We anticipate an interesting 51st ASSA conference in April, to be hosted by the University of Namibia in Swakopmund. We also anticipate a unique experience at IFAA 2026 in Melbourne, Australia, in August.

On a personal note, here at the end of my first newsletter as editor - Thank you to everyone who made this an exceptional year – in support, in collaboration, and in being blessings in my personal and professional spheres.

To all – a blessed festive season, and a wonderful new year.

Associate Professor Petra Maass