

# SA HIV researcher wins top women in science award

 By [Nicci Botha](#)

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Ever since Marie Curie pioneered the x-ray, women have played an invaluable role in scientific research and innovation, and HIV/Aids researcher, Professor Quarraisha Abdool Karim is no exception.



Professor Quarraisha Abdool Karim

Her benchmark work in the realm of HIV/Aids research has won her global recognition, and most recently she has been named one of five L'Oréal-UNESCO For Women in Science for 2016.

## In her own words

"I feel deeply honoured and privileged to be a recipient of this very prestigious award for eminent women scientists. I hope that this award inspires young women in Africa and the Middle East to pursue careers in science and technology as the world needs more women in science."

"Our region needs more scientists addressing the many challenges that face us locally including ways to prevent HIV infection in adolescent girls and young women who continue to bear a disproportionate burden of HIV infection in the region," says Prof. Abdool Karim.

## Contribution to science

The awards' citation reads: "Impacting the lives of people around the planet, their discoveries are offering new solutions and answering vital questions. The Laureates' work and research is contributing to curing diseases, increasing food supplies, enabling sustainable development, helping ensure the survival of our planet to better understand our universe, adding to our knowledge of the very foundations of life. Around 36,9 million people live with HIV worldwide, and Prof. Abdool Karim's research has empowered women to help prevent HIV infection in Africa."

## Impressive pedigree

Currently, the associate scientific director of CAPRISA (Centre for the Aids Programme of Research in SA), the professor is an infectious diseases epidemiologist and is also currently the vice-president (Southern African Region) of the African Academy of Sciences. She chairs the South African National AIDS Council Prevention Technical Task Team and is a

member of the UNAIDS Scientific Expert Panel.

Her main research interests are:

- understanding the evolving HIV epidemic in South Africa
- factors influencing acquisition of HIV infection in adolescent girls
- sustainable strategies to introduce HAART in resource-constrained settings

Notably she was the principal investigator of the landmark CAPRISA 004 tenofovir gel trial which provided proof of concept for microbicides, highlighted by science as one of the top 10 scientific breakthroughs in 2010.

Since 1998, she has played a central role in building the science base in Southern Africa through the Columbia University - Southern African Fogarty AIDS International Training and Research Programme that has trained over 600 scientists in Southern Africa.

Prof. Abdool Karim will collect her R1.7 million prize at the Grand Amphitheatre of the Sorbonne in Paris on 24 March 2016.

## ABOUT NICCI BOTHA

Nicci Botha has been wordsmithing for more than 20 years, covering just about every subject under the sun and then some. She's strung together words on sustainable development, maritime matters, mining, marketing, medical, lifestyle... and that elixir of life - chocolate. Nicci has worked for local and international media houses including Primedia, Caxton, Lloyd's and Reuters. Her new passion is digital media.

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