

Abbott partners with Ceri to address viral threats

With the increasing rates of urbanisation, global travel and climate change, infectious disease experts predict the world is entering a new era of pandemics. In response to this, Abbott founded the Abbott Pandemic Defense Coalition.



Source: Supplied. Stellenbosch University's new Biomedical Research Institute, home to Ceri, is the most advanced research facility of its kind on the African continent.

It comprises 20 scientific and public-health organisations from across the globe that are committed to detecting and responding to emerging viral threats.

Since its launch in 2021, the global coalition has partnered with organisations in Africa to build up the network and capabilities in the region.

The Centre for Epidemic Response and Innovation (Ceri) at Stellenbosch University is one of the recent partners, that recently unveiled a new genomics facility that will enable early detection and the rapid response to emerging threats in Africa in collaboration with the Abbott Pandemic Defense Coalition.

“No one organisation, network or country is strong enough to effectively fight against viral pathogens,” says Mary Rodgers, principal scientist at Abbott’s diagnostics business. “We therefore must have an ongoing global commitment to pandemic preparedness – and key to that is collaboration across the private and public sectors to detect and have a rapid response to emerging threats.

"Our partnership with Ceri will expand testing capacity to continue research in understanding how known viruses are spreading in order to identify new viral outbreaks, so that we can stop them from becoming the next pandemic."



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Katja Hamilton 28 Apr 2023



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The state-of-the-art genomics facility is equipped with new technology such as metagenomics next generation sequencing which is revolutionising how viruses are discovered; creating a genome that once took years to complete can now be sequenced and analysed in a day or two.

The genomics centre will also have access to Abbott's diagnostics molecular lab testing capabilities to provide fast and scalable molecular testing, as well as provide researchers the ability to create molecular tests for new and emerging viral threats.

Tulio de Oliveira, director of Ceri concludes, "The partnership with the Abbott Pandemic Defense Coalition will help train Africa's next generation of virus hunters and public health experts in cutting-edge sequencing, bioinformatics, and other technologies so that they can track and identify viruses faster and smarter.

"The launch of this new genomics facility is a testament to our shared commitment to advancing scientific knowledge and protecting public health in Africa."

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