

SAPRIN AWARDS SECOND NODAL PHD FELLOWSHIP TO DR DARSHINI GOVINDASAMY

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Dr Darshini Govindasamy



Mr Stanley Carries

SAPRIN has awarded its second nodal PhD Fellowship to Dr Darshini Govindasamy, who will be supervising PhD student, Mr Stanley Carries.

The [South African Population Research Infrastructure Network](#) (SAPRIN) PhD Fellowship uses the Principal Investigator (PI) model. The PI who will supervise the PhD activities is the main applicant. The PI needs at least three years post-doctoral experience and must be affiliated to a SAPRIN node.

Dr Govindasamy is a specialist scientist at the [Health Systems Research Unit](#) (HSRU) at the [South African Medical Research Council](#) (SAMRC), leading the Youth Health Economics focal area. She has a Doctorate in Public Health and Policy-Health Economics from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

PhD student, Stanley Carries is a senior scientist at the SAMRC's HSRU. His current research interests are in economic evaluations and human centred design thinking related to complex interventions for improving health and wellbeing among vulnerable youth.

The PhD will focus on, *“Development of a wellbeing measure for application in economic evaluations of interventions for adolescents living with HIV in Sub-Saharan Africa.”* Stanley Carries is registered at the University of Stellenbosch, fulfilling the pre-requisite of registering at a university associated with a SAPRIN node.

A requirement of the Fellowship is that the study must make use of Health and Demographic Surveillance System (HDSS) data that is routinely collected at a SAPRIN node, and/ or be based on primary data collected in a study that is embedded in one or more SAPRIN nodes.

The PhD project is in collaboration with the [Umlazi Surveillance Initiative to Nurture Grassroots Action](#) (USINGA) HDSS node. USINGA is the sixth SAPRIN HDSS node and its third urban node. The Fellowship aims to advance a theme of knowledge at a node under the guidance of an emerging PI whose work is embedded in the node. It will also provide a first-rate learning experience for the research student, who will obtain the doctorate based on this work.

“For a national research infrastructure like SAPRIN a primary responsibility is to strengthen the scientific community by supporting the development of new talent in research fields that are highly relevant for South Africa’s emerging health and social challenges. This doctoral fellowship is designed to help achieve this goal,” emphasised Professor Mark Collinson, Co-Director of SAPRIN.

Dr Govindasamy expressed her gratitude to SAPRIN for helping to build the pipeline of health economists at the SAMRC. Govindasamy added that the field of economic evaluations needed tools that would allow them to assess broader value for money in terms of wellbeing.

“Stanley’s PhD project, in collaboration with the USINGA node, is going to move us closer to filling an important methodological gap for economic evaluations of interventions aiming to improve adolescent health and wellbeing in Sub-Saharan Africa,” said Govindasamy.

Darshini is a supervisor to 3 doctoral students, has supervised 3 masters students and has examined 5 dissertations. Darshini has worked on 31 published papers and is the academic editor for PLoS Global Health (health economics).

The fellowship value is approximately R 2 million over a four-year period covering tuition, research and a stipend.

The first SAPRIN PhD Fellowship was awarded in 2023 to Professor Eric Maimela, as the PI who is supervising student Kagiso Seakamela who is registered at the University of Limpopo. The dissertation is titled “*The development of an evidenced-based model for the management and prevention of multimorbidity in the DIMAMO Health and Demographic Surveillance Systems.*”

Background Information (saprin.mrc.ac.za)

The South African Population Research Infrastructure Network (SAPRIN) currently consists of six Health and Demographic Surveillance System (HDSS), 3 rural and 3 urban. The rural nodes are in Bushbuckridge (Agincourt), Polokwane (DIMAMO), and Mtubatuba (Africa Health Research Institute). The 3 urban nodes are in Gauteng (GRT-INSPIRED in Hillbrow, Atteridgeville, and Melusi), the Western Cape (C-SHARP in Bishop Lavis and Nomzamo), and KwaZulu-Natal (USINGA in Umlazi, eThekweni). Each HDSS node aims to have a minimum population of 100,000 people.

SAPRIN is funded by the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI) and hosted at the South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC). The research infrastructure forms part of the DSI’s strategy to enhance research capacity in the country and aligns with the DSI’s South African Research Infrastructure Roadmap (SARIR).

SAPRIN is a valuable resource for researchers and policymakers working to improve the health and wellbeing of South African communities. Through its focus on collaboration, partnership, and ethical research practices, SAPRIN is helping to build a more robust and responsive research infrastructure in South Africa, and to support evidence-based decision-making and policy development.