

"CLOSING THE GAP" - AN ILAE EPIACT-FUNDED PROJECT

The establishment of Epilepsy Teaching in Adult Medicine (ETAM) training and upscaling of Paediatric Epilepsy Training (PET) courses across South Africa to reach key community-based healthcare providers

In November 2020, the 73rd World Health Assembly adopted resolution WHA 73.10 – the intersectoral global action plan on epilepsy and other neurological disorders (IGAP). The IGAP provides a 10-year roadmap to improve the lives of all people living with epilepsy and other chronic neurological conditions. It includes an epilepsy specific objective: strengthen public health approach to epilepsy.

The project seeks to strengthen epilepsy care pathways by improving diagnostic recognition, rational prescribing, protocol-driven acute seizure management, and appropriate utilisation of limited specialist resources. The specific interventions proposed are to establish a sustainable South African Epilepsy Training in Adult Medicine (ETAM) faculty to deliver quarterly epilepsy training to strategic high-impact locations across South Africa. Concurrently, the delivery of Paediatric Epilepsy Training (PET) courses will be upscaled across South Africa to reach a broader and more diverse group of community-based healthcare providers.

Six sites have been identified across the country and will receive either ETAM or PET training in year one of the project. In year two, the same sites will receive the complementary training i.e. either PET or ETAM. The impact of this expanded model of training will be measured by demonstrated change in knowledge and confidence in practice of epilepsy diagnosis and management by healthcare providers across multiple settings of epilepsy care (i.e. emergency, primary and district level).

This project offers valuable opportunities for strengthening ties between the International League Against Epilepsy (ILAE) South African chapter and the International Bureau against Epilepsy-affiliated Epilepsy SA, and to provide an avenue for consistent engagement between patient advocacy groups and healthcare providers at each training course. It also offers an opportunity to strengthen collaboration between paediatric and adult epilepsy care providers, and align practice across sectors to facilitate transition of care.

WHAT ARE THE AIMS OF THE PROJECT?

The project seeks to generate actionable evidence by collecting pre and post training data at participant and facility level to enable structured feedback to key stakeholders to inform future training strategies and national epilepsy care planning.

ESTABLISH A SUSTAINABLE ETAM FACULTY AND EXPAND PET ACCESS ACROSS SOUTH AFRICA

- Assessing changes in clinician knowledge, confidence and clinical decision-making
- Evaluating impact on epilepsy care practices across emergency, primary and district services

IMPROVE EPILEPSY DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT

- Standardising acute seizure management by encouraging adoption of evidence-based protocols for acute seizure presentations, to strengthen early recognition and stabilisation of acute seizure presentations at primary, district and emergency levels
- Promoting rational diagnostic resource use (e.g. EEGs) and referral pathways to optimise specialist resource utilisation through improved referral practices.

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THE TEAM BEHIND THE PROJECT

Steering committee members:

- Prof Jo Wilmshurst, UCT – Principal investigator (jo.wilmshurst@uct.ac.za)
- Dr MV Gule, UCT – ETAM rollout lead (mv.gule@gmail.com)
- Prof Gail Scher, Wits University – PET rollout lead (gail.scher@wits.ac.za)
- Dr Serini Murugasen, UCT – Research component lead (serini.murugasen@uct.ac.za)
- Prof Lawrence Tucker, UCT

International collaborators:

- Prof Helen Cross, International League Against Epilepsy
- Prof Martin Kirkpatrick, British Paediatric Neurology Association

Support team members:

- Ms Sarah Jacobs
- Ms Arlene Marthinus

Social welfare collaborators:

- Sharlene Cassell – South African chair for IBE
- Sloan Mahone – social scientist, University of Oxford.



However, this project can only be successful with the assistance of regional champions and committees who will both run the ETAM/PET courses and assist with the data collection aspect of the project.

HOW IS THE PROJECT FUNDED?

This two-year project is funded through an EPI-ACT grant by the ILAE. EPI-ACT is a series of initiatives and funding grants launched by the ILAE to support regional chapters in closing epilepsy treatment, inclusion, and research gaps.



ETAM DATABASE



PET DATABASE

HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?

As part of the local organising committee – we need local champions to assist with the rollout of ETAM and PET and to help us identify local contacts for measuring the impact of the project.

As a participant – join ETAM and/or PET and learn how to improve the standard of care for people living with epilepsy in SA.



Scan to join the ETAM/PET database and receive updates on upcoming training and events!