

# FLATTENING THE OTHER CURVES

The COVID-19 pandemic should be used as an opportunity to pursue healthier lifestyle choices.

While epidemics with catastrophic effects such as COVID-19 tend to make headlines, other epidemics such as obesity and hypertension often go ignored.

COVID-19 has disrupted our global daily routine. Some of us have lost jobs, while others are not coping with the increased demands. There are people starving, while others are anxiously falling into comfort-eating routines. COVID-19 has led to poorer lifestyle choices.

Dr Sherika Hanley specialises in obesity, hypertension and diabetes in people living with HIV. She warns that while these underlying conditions may lead to a more severe form of COVID-19, the dangers of obesity have not been stressed enough.

“Obesity is associated with an inflammatory state and affects chest wall mechanics, which complicates the management of COVID-19,” she says. “While all the underlying conditions may be preventable, obesity is the one that is curable.”

Hanley hopes that people will use the lifestyle changes that the COVID-19 pandemic has forced upon them as an opportunity to make changes in their diet and activity as well.

“We should offer health education in schools and at every point of contact at



Use the COVID-19 pandemic to make healthier lifestyle choices.

healthcare facilities, make use of public announcements, and provide safe outdoor spaces for exercise,” says Hanley.

Government should also support the small-scale local production of fruit, vegetables and grains, especially in rural areas, and consider subsidising fruit and vegetables grown in private and communal gardens.

“The success of the ‘flatten the (coronavirus) curve’ message is proof that public health messages can successfully reach out and be heard. Together, we can flatten the other curves.”

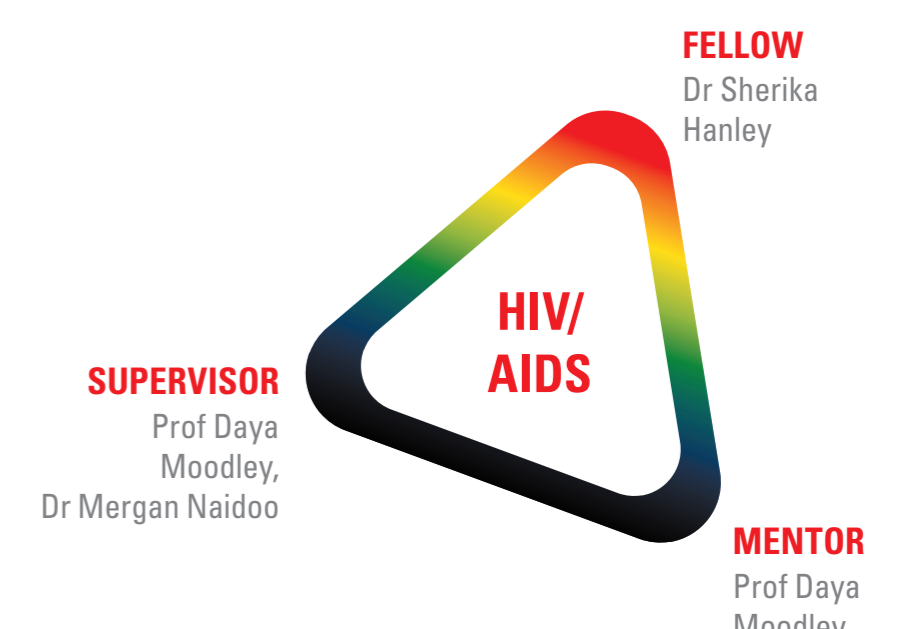


## Towards Research Leadership

Dr Sherika Hanley is a research physician and family medicine specialist at CAPRISA at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

 @sherika\_hanley

Developing Research Innovation, Localisation and Leadership (DRILL) is a health sciences training programme producing research excellence in South Africa. DRILL creates a triad of support for emerging researchers.



Research poster developed in collaboration with Jive Media Africa, research communication specialists.  
[www.jivemedia.co.za](http://www.jivemedia.co.za)

