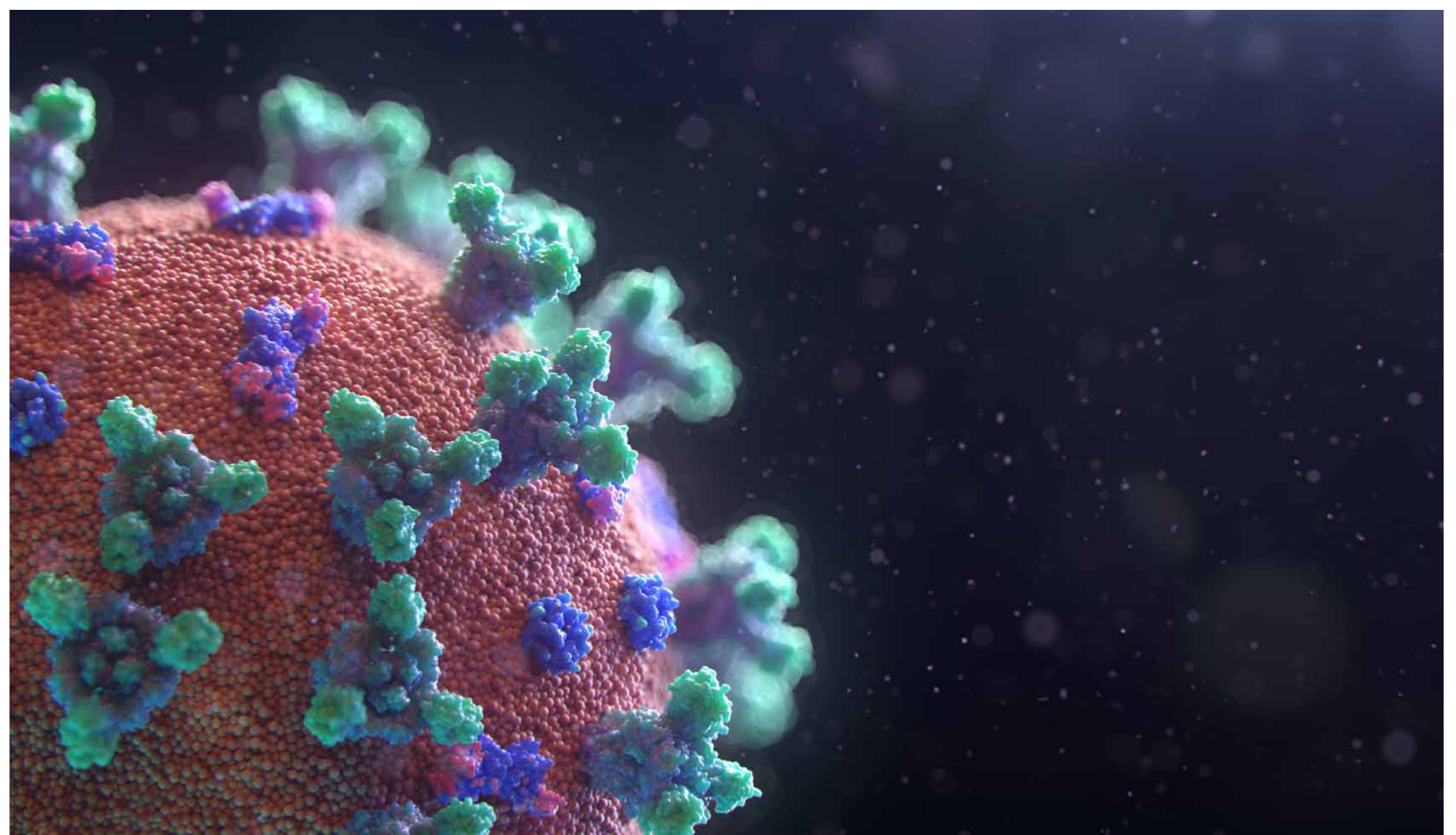


# COVID-19: AN UNSEEN AND VICIOUS ENEMY

People infected and affected by HIV are at an increased risk of complications and death due to the coronavirus pandemic.

There remains a lack of information about coronavirus immunity and antibodies. Limited data thus far indicate that antibodies capable of combatting the virus only peaks for about 3 weeks but declines thereafter. Coronavirus-2 can also mechanistically evade immune restriction. This holds serious implications on whether our immune system can develop immunity against the Coronavirus-2 and if a vaccine will have any clinical benefits. In South Africa, the COVID-19 situation is alarming as the country has the highest number of people infected with HIV globally, including a large number of HIV-positive individuals that have low CD4 counts and are not on ARV treatment, which helps to suppress HIV.

COVID-19 spreads via droplets from infected people who cough or sneeze. The virus is highly contagious and has caused millions of infections worldwide. South Africa faces major challenges, in particular, maintaining social distancing among people living in informal settlements. Some households in these settlements consist of large families living in two rooms without proper water and sanitation facilities (communal).



No significant medical intervention has been found to be effective against this coronavirus yet.

Although much is known about the structure of this coronavirus and certain target sites have been identified, there are still no drug targets against any viral structural components. However, preliminary trials have shown that the steroid dexamethasone reduced death rates by a third among seriously ill patients, so it has become the first drug proven to save the lives of patients infected with COVID-19. Another drug called

remdesivir has also been proposed for the treatment of COVID-19. However, the dawn of a vaccine or any significant medical intervention is still lingering.

“In response to this tsunami at our door, let safety come first. This includes implementing a change in social behaviour such as sanitizing hands, wearing a mask and maintaining social distance to overcome the impact of COVID-19,” says Dr Jacobus Hendricks.

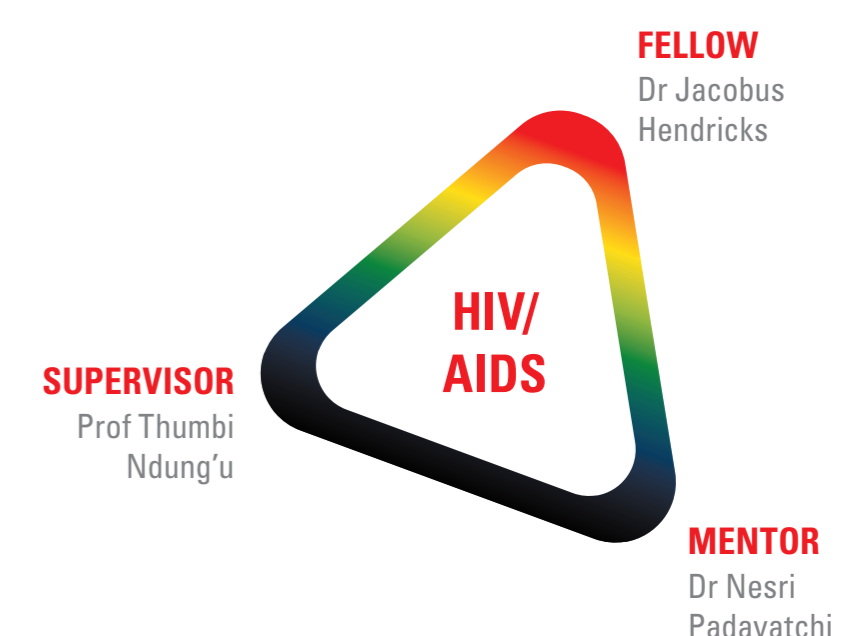


## Towards Research Leadership

Dr Jacobus Hendricks is a lecturer in infectious diseases at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

 @hendricksj20

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