

## **INVITED SPEAKERS**



**Ms. Carine Marks** is a Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences at Stellenbosch University and serves as the Director of the Tygerberg Poison Information Centre. She holds a BSc in Pharmacy, BSc Honours in Pharmacology, MSc in Medical Science (Toxicology), and an MPhil in Health Professions Education. Currently, she is pursuing a PhD, further contributing to the field of toxicology and medical education.

With extensive experience in poison centre capacity building, Carine plays an important role in the NIHR RIGHT4 initiative, specifically as the Co-Lead of Work Project 5, which focuses on preventing deaths from acute poisoning in low- and middle-income countries (2023-2028). She has collaborated extensively with the World Health Organisation on various projects aimed at establishing and enhancing Poison Information Centres globally, reflecting a strong commitment to improving public health and saving lives through better toxicology practices and education.

### **Building Poison Centres**

The NIHR RIGHT4 initiative stands as a transformative project, tackling the often-overlooked crisis of acute poisoning in low and middle-income countries (LMICs). In regions where thousands of preventable deaths occur annually due to insufficient clinical care and scarce resources, this initiative's vision is clear: to transform the clinical management of acute poisoning, enhance the capacity of Poison Information Centres (PICs) and foster a global focus on research in this critical area.

Central to this mission is the building of PICs within LMICs. These centres are the backbone of poisoning prevention, diagnosis, and treatment, offering vital support to clinicians who may lack the specialized toxicology expertise needed to manage such cases effectively. By prioritizing the strengthening of PICs, the NIHR RIGHT4 initiative seeks to reshape the landscape of poison management across these regions.

A key component of this endeavour is the implementation of standardized practices for establishing and operating PICs. Integral to this is the provision of TOXBASE, an online and app-based poison management database that offers guidance on handling over 21,000 poisons. This essential resource is provided free of charge to PICs in LMICs, ensuring that even the most resource-constrained centres have access to the critical information required for managing poisoning cases.

Moreover, the initiative places a strong emphasis on capacity building through mentorship and training programs. Collaborations with prominent clinical toxicology associations, such as the Asia Pacific Association of Medical Toxicology (APAMT) and the Middle East and North Africa Toxicology Association (MENATOX), play a significant role in teaching PIC procedures at annual congresses. Scholarships are offered to participants from underrepresented countries and groups, nurturing a new generation of toxicology experts in LMICs.

The NIHR RIGHT4 initiative is particularly attuned to the unique challenges faced by African nations, where the existence of PICs is often limited or non-existent. The initiative is exploring and developing models for delivering effective poison information and care that can be adapted and scaled continent-wide.

Ultimately, the NIHR RIGHT4 initiative aspires to empower PICs across all LMICs, equipping them to respond effectively to poisoning emergencies and significantly reduce the number of preventable deaths. Through an integrated approach that combines research, resource provision, training, and international collaboration, this initiative is set to make a profound and lasting impact on global public health.