



HIV VACCINE
TRIALS NETWORK



HPTN
HIV Prevention
Trials Network

The HVTN and HPTN Remember Gita Ramjee



Gita Ramjee, PhD, renowned for her extensive work on HIV prevention and a valued colleague to so many in the HIV Vaccine and Prevention Trials Networks (HVTN and HPTN), sadly succumbed to complications associated with SARS-CoV-2 infection.

Gita started her career in science after receiving her PhD at the University of Sunderland in the United Kingdom (UK). Her scientific work centered in South Africa early in the HIV epidemic where she led a project on vaginal microbicides for the prevention of HIV among a group of sex workers working along the trucking route between the port city of Durban and the commercial capital in Johannesburg.

As she noted when she received the European [“Outstanding Female Scientist”](#) Award by the European Development Clinical Trials Partnerships for her work on finding new HIV prevention methods:

“I learned about the dire need for women-initiated HIV prevention options and the socio-behavioral and cultural factors that impact women’s lives. I dedicated my time to researching methods of HIV prevention.” – Dr. Gita Ramjee

Gita pursued this mission up to her sudden passing, as a critical investigator for the HVTN and HPTN.

“We are deeply saddened that Dr. Gita Ramjee passed away due to a COVID-19 infection,” said Dr. Larry Corey HVTN principal investigator (PI).

Gita spent the past 18 years of her career as the director and chief specialist scientist of the HIV Prevention Research Unit, South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC). She was also an honorary professor in the Department of Epidemiology and Population Health, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, and a clinical professor in the Department of Global Health, School of Public Health, University of Washington, Seattle.

“She left a lasting imprint on HIV prevention research and the HVTN through her dedication, critical thinking and lasting commitment to our collaborative group of scientists,” said Dr. Glenda Gray HVTN co-PI and president and CEO of the SAMRC. “She was an incredibly committed colleague to the cause of reducing the impact of HIV on South African society.”

In her leadership role, she trained and mentored numerous cohorts of scientists and clinical trial staff, who now populate the network of trial sites in South Africa and beyond. They will carry her legacy forward for many years.

Gita was a study principal investigator and unit director for many of the National Institutes of Allergy and Infectious Diseases and the Division of AIDS’ HIV prevention networks clinical trials, ranging from early phase studies to late phase efficacy trials. She contributed to our understanding of the role of topical and systemic products in HIV prevention, and more recently, made a notable contribution to the active and passive immunization programs in the HVTN and HPTN.

“She will be sorely missed by generations of HIV prevention scientists,” said Dr. Wafaa El-Sadr, HPTN co-PI and director of ICAP at Columbia University in New York. “Gita’s energy and dynamism were incomparable. Her steadfast commitment to the quest for effective HIV prevention methods and women’s health will continue to motivate all of us who had the opportunity to know her and work with her.”

“Gita was a wonderful colleague and friend who made critical contributions to HIV prevention throughout her long and distinguished career; she will be greatly missed,” said Dr. Myron S. Cohen, HPTN co-PI and director of the Institute for Global Health and Infectious Diseases at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Our thoughts and prayers go out to her family and all her friends and colleagues who worked with her throughout these years. Her sudden passing will be a significant loss to our organizations and leave an even larger hole in our hearts.

We carry you in our memories, Gita,

Drs. Larry Corey, Glenda Gray, Myron S. Cohen, Wafaa El-Sadr, and Jim Kublin