Medical Research Council of South Africa

Medical Research Council of South Africa
Burden of Disease Research Unit
PO Box 19070
Tygerberg 7505
South Africa

The Medical Research Council (MRC) of South Africa was established in 1970 as a national resource to support health and medical research in the country. The MRC’s mission is to improve the nation’s health and quality of life through promoting and conducting relevant and responsive health research, and to contribute to the development of the region. In order to meet its national research mandate, the MRC has established 41 extramural and intramural Research Units, Groups and Lead Programmes. Just over half are extramural research units, which receive operational funding from the MRC, but are attached to, and managed within, universities around the country. Eighteen intramural research units are contained within the organizational structure of the MRC.

The Burden of Disease Research Unit is an intramural unit that was established to collate and analyse data relating to health status and factors affecting health. The mission of the Research Unit is to assess and monitor the country's health status and determinants of disease; and to project the future burden of disease in order to provide planning information to improve the health of the nation. Multidisciplinary approaches are used drawing on epidemiology, demography and biostatistics. Expertise has been developed in the area of summary health measures, health surveys and the analysis of mortality data. The unit collaborates with people at all levels of the health service and government in order to improve the surveillance and management information systems used to collect such data. In particular, technical support has been provided to government to improve vital registration and health surveys. Collaborations have been established with academic institutions and international agencies. Inequalities are of particular importance given the legacy of the apartheid history in South Africa, the current macro-economic trends arising from globalization and the fundamental contribution of social determinants to health.

VPA focal person

Richard Matzopoulos
Tel: +27 21 4066765
E-mail: Richard.Matzopoulos@mrc.ac.za

Richard Matzopoulos is an epidemiologist and specialist scientist at the Medical Research Council of South Africa’s Burden of Disease Research Unit. He is also an Honorary Research Associate at the University of Cape Town’s School of Public Health and Family Medicine and Chairs the Injury Prevention Working Group, a transversal structure within the Western Cape Government that seeks to reduce the burden of injury in the province by focusing on interventions that target upstream determinants. Surveillance activities related to this project include the institutionalization of an all-cause injury mortality surveillance system throughout the province and the development of a trauma unit-based non-fatal-injury surveillance system. Prevention activities have centred on policy and interventions relating to alcohol abuse and long-term intersectoral engagement to address more distal causes of violence and injuries.