



STRong Heart

Strengthening Trials and Research
for Rheumatic Heart Disease



Prof Liesl Zühlke

South African Medical Research Council
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Paediatric Cardiologist and Specialist Scientist

Qualifications: MBChB, DCH, FCPaed, Cert Card, MPH, PHD, MSc

About

Prof Liesl Zühlke is the Vice President for Extramural Research and Intramural Portfolio at the South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC), and the Director of the Children's Heart Disease Research Unit (CHDRU) at the Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital, which she founded in 2015. A leading authority in Rheumatic Heart Disease (RHD) across Africa and globally, she is the recipient of the largest philanthropic award for RHD research and the largest congenital heart disease (CHD) grant on the continent. She also serves as the national lead for two major international studies.

Prof Zühlke's research portfolio spans congenital and rheumatic heart disease, HIV in adolescents, grown-up congenital heart disease, and cardiac disease in women of childbearing age. Recognised as one of the top three international scholars in RHD, she delivered the prestigious T. Duckett Jones Lecture and received the Young Hearts Award in 2022.

She is a past president of both the South African Heart Association and the Paediatric Cardiac Society of South Africa, as well as the outgoing chair and co-chair of the PASCAR PANPACH (Paediatric and Congenital Cardiology) and RHD Task Forces. Internationally, she serves as President of Reach (Rheumatic Heart Disease, Evidence, Advocacy, Communication and Hope), an initiative that provides scientific and technical support for global RHD programmes. She is also a member of the medical advisory committee of Children's HeartLink, an international advisory committee member for Global ARCH, and an executive member of SAVAC, the global Strep A vaccine consortium.

Prof Zühlke is a B1 NRF-rated researcher for the period 2023–2027.