RESEARCH (MEDICAL) OFFICER

(6-month contract)

Department of Pediatrics and Child Health

Faculty of Health Sciences

Please note that only applications from suitably qualified members of the permanent and temporary UCT staff will be considered.

If you meet the requirements below; we invite you to apply for the full-time (40 hours per week), 6-month (Appointment for further years; dependant on available funding) T1 fixed-term contract position as a Research (Medical) Officer in the Department of Paediatrics and Child Health at University of Cape Town.

The primary purpose of this position is the collection and quality control of research data, with the incumbent taking ownership of data integrity across assigned study activities. Beyond data collection, the Medical Officer will play an active operational role, working alongside the Project Administrator and Data Manager to co-ordinate daily study activities, and will be expected to assist with training, supervising, and providing day-to-day leadership to junior members of the research team.

The Research (Medical) Officer will work closely with the broader research group and study participants to ensure rigorous, protocol-compliant data collection in accordance with ethical guidelines. Core duties include conducting structured clinical interviews and examinations, collecting biological specimens, and administering formal cognitive, developmental, and behavioural assessments. The Medical Officer will also contribute to participant engagement by presenting study information to relevant stakeholders and will be expected to contribute to academic outputs where appropriate.

As part of an integrated research group, the Research (Medical) Officer may be called upon to support activities across other studies within the group when operational needs require, and flexibility in this regard is essential. This post is held within the Department of Paediatrics and Child Health, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Cape Town. The incumbent will primarily be based between a satellite research facility in Rondebosch, Cape Town, and the Neurosciences Institute at Groote Schuur Hospital, with occasional work at other facilities such as Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital.

About the study:

The Khula Study: A Multi-Modal, Longitudinal Birth Cohort Study of Neurodevelopment in Global Majority Settings

The Research (Medical) Officer will contribute to two inter-related waves of the Khula Study, a multi-modal, multi-site, longitudinal birth cohort study designed to characterise early neurodevelopment in low- and middle-income country (LMIC) settings. The study is premised on the understanding that cognitive and socio-emotional development occurs within, and in adaptation to, specific environmental and cultural contexts, and seeks to identify understand these relationships within a South African context.

Wave 1 employed an integrative approach combining EEG, MRI, behavioural assessments, and microbiome sampling to characterise the emergence of executive functions during the first 1000 days of life in birth cohorts recruited in South Africa and Malawi. Initial data collection has been completed, and the cohort is now being followed up into the pre-school years.

Wave 2, builds on this foundation with an expanded focus on language development and cognition. A key aim is the identification and validation of scalable EEG tools capable of generating predictive markers of neurodevelopment for use across LMIC settings. Mothers were recruited in late pregnancy (28–36 weeks' gestation) and infants are followed to 2 years of age, with visits at birth and at 3, 6, 12, 18, and 24 months, across sites in South Africa and the United States.

Together, the two waves span late pregnancy through the pre-school years, offering a comprehensive picture of early neurodevelopment from infancy to toddlerhood and beyond.

Requirements:

- Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBChB)
- Current registration with the Health Professional Council of South Africa (HPCSA) as an Independent Practitioner
- Excellent verbal and written fluency in English
- Verbal fluency in isiXhosa or Afrikaans
- At least 1 years' experience in paediatric medicine and basic paediatric procedures such as venipuncture, urine collection etc.
- At least 2 years' work experience in clinical paediatric research and/or clinical data collection
- Formal training in clinical research regulations, GCP (good clinical practise) or equivalent, and research ethical guidelines
- Demonstrated understanding of being mindful of cultural differences and adapting communication and administration methods to respect diverse participants.
- Strong attention to detail and ability to work independently and collaboratively within a team
- Demonstrated commitment to ethical conduct, patient safety and maintaining confidentiality
- Solution driven with strong ability to problem solve.
- Ability to multitask and prioritize tasks effectively in a fast paced environment.
- Competency in REDCap, Google sheets and Microsoft Office suite.
- Knowledge of referral pathways and packages of care offered at different levels of care in the Western Cape.

Advantageous:

- Experience in working with children with developmental disorders (e.g. ADHD, ASD, intellectual disability etc.)
- Experience and/or familiarity with psychometric or qualitative assessment tools specific to peadiatric research such as developmental screening tools, standardised behavioural cognitive or psychosocial assessments

- Experience in sample collection for clinical research and biobank management
- Experience or training in the provision of psychological first aid

Responsibilities:

Data Collection and Quality Assurance:

- Conduct structured clinical interviews, including clinical examinations and medical histories
- Provide medical expertise and clinical supervision of research participants enrolled in the study; making necessary referrals when indicated.
- Conduct data collection procedures according to the study protocols, which includes standardized behavioural, cognitive or psychosocial questionnaires. *You will be trained on the job in specific tools which will be used in the study.*
- Collect biological samples from both children and their parents (e.g. blood, urine, saliva, stool)
- Perform quality checks of collected clinical data, ensure accuracy and completeness.
- Review medical folders and record relevant information in accordance with study protocols.

Communication and Documentation:

- Report to Principal Investigator and Senior Clinical Research Officer on medical research activities, complex clinical cases, referrals made and challenges faced.
- Collaborate with Principal Investigator, Senior Clinical Research Officer and rest of research team to design protocols and strategies for data collection.
- Contribute to the preparation of research reports, manuscripts and presentations.
- Prepare presentations for local clinicians and other key stakeholders to raise awareness about the study and share research findings when required.

Training and Development:

- Stay updated on relevant research methodologies, protocols and procedures.
- Participate in training sessions and contribute to the improvement of data collection process.

Leadership:

- Assist project administrator with day-to-day co-ordination of research activities and on-the-ground problem solving
- Collaborate with project administrator and data team to ensure day-to-day research activities running smoothly
- Lead project clinical team: support nursing team and research assistants in clinical aspects of research related activities

The annual cost of employment is R1,001 350.

To apply, please e-mail the below documents in a **single pdf file** to **Hendrike** at SEED.applications@uct.ac.za

- UCT Application Form (download at http://forms.uct.ac.za/hr201.doc)
- Cover letter,
- 1 referee report and,
- Curriculum Vitae (CV)

Please ensure the title and reference number are indicated in the subject line.

An application which does not comply with the above requirements will be regarded as incomplete.

Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted and may be required to undergo a competency test.

Website: https://neuroscience.uct.ac.za/research-research-groupings/neurodevelopment-group
Reference number: E26613
Closing date: 15 June 2026

"UCT is a designated employer and is committed to the pursuit of excellence, diversity, and redress in achieving its equity targets in accordance with the Employment Equity Plan of the University and its Employment Equity goals and targets. Preference will be given to candidates from the under-represented designated groups. Our Employment Equity Policy is available at https://uct.ac.za/oic/employment-equity

When you apply for a position at UCT, we collect your personal information to assess your application, communicate with you, and coordinate interview logistics. Information such as race, gender, nationality, and disability status is used to support our Employment Equity obligations. We also verify your references, qualifications, conduct criminal and, for certain roles, credit checks. For more information about how the University of Cape Town uses personal information and your rights, please email popia@uct.ac.za.

The University reserves the right to extend the closing date for applications if deemed necessary and reserves the right to make no appointment.