

ImpENSA

Capacity Building to Improve Early Nutrition and Health in South Africa



LETTER FROM THE TEAM

ImpENSA Training Programme Launch and 6th biannual project meeting

Kerry Sexton (SUN and UCT)

After 3 years of hard work, collaboration, capacity building and the chaos of COVID, the consortium gathered in the first week of April for the first face to face biannual meeting in 2 years. The Stellenbosch team hosted the event and welcomed partners to the beautiful, autumn clad town.

Meetings were held over the course of the week to discuss the recently completed pilot of the ImpENSA training programme and the ongoing evaluation of the coordinator training and pilot, with some great preliminary feedback from participants of both. Partners also reflected on the project's outcomes and achievements to date and discussed the way forward, which includes the creation of a social enterprise to ensure sustainability of the training programme.

The highlight of the week, and the culmination of all the hard work, was the official launch of the ImpENSA Training Programme, held at the Faculty of Medicine and Health Science, Tygerberg campus. Prof Hester Kloppers, Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Strategy and Internationalisation, opened the proceedings by welcoming over a hundred in-person and virtual attendees. In his keynote address, Prof Shane Norris, the Director of the DSI-NRF Centre of Excellence in Human Development and the MRC/Wits Developmental Pathways for Health Research Unit at Wits University, emphasised the importance of life course nutrition. He was followed by Gilbert Tshitauzi, Nutrition Specialist at UNICEF, who highlighted how the ImpENSA Training Programme aligns with their programming approaches of advocacy, capacity development and working with partners to tackle the multifaceted challenge of malnutrition. The focal point of the launch however, was the presentations by ImpENSA partners on their roles and experiences resulting in the creation of the Training Programme.

It was lovely to reconnect in person, and to share and celebrate personal and professional achievements too – new ImpENSA babies, a couple of grandbabies, a PhD or two, a paediatric speciality, and two auspicious retirements. Although it was sad to say goodbye at the end of the week, we look forward to the final meeting in Munich in November to conclude a very successful collaboration.



The ImpENSA Training Programme

Module 1

Optimising micronutrient nutrition during the first 1000 days of life

Module 2

Communication to support behaviour change

Module 3

Healthy Conversation Skills to support behaviour change

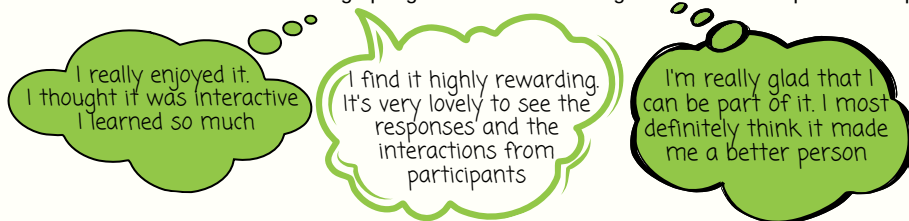
RECENT MOVEMENTS

ImpENSA TtC Mentoring Programme effective in preparing new SA coordinators

Bernadeta Patro-Golab (MUW) and Sunhea Choi (UoS)

Module 3 is a facilitated module, and therefore 4 South African coordinators were identified to undergo the ImpENSA Train-the-Coordinator (TtC) Mentoring Programme in order to deliver the Healthy Conversation Skills sessions. Three of these coordinators completed the ImpENSA TtC Mentoring Programme evaluation study – evaluation activities during and after the programme between August and October 2021, and follow-up evaluation activities after delivery of the ImpENSA Training Programme by these newly trained coordinators to 4 pilot groups of healthcare professionals between December and February 2022.

During the online interviews at different time points participants shared with us overall positive feedback regarding their experience as mentees of the programme. They emphasised professional and personal benefits gained from the programme, such as knowledge and skills gain but also personal growth and development. Based on the collected data from observations of the programme, expert observations, interviews and structured self-reflection, our research team can conclude that the TtC Mentoring Programme equipped the participants to deliver the ImpENSA Training Programme competently. More importantly, our SA coordinators were highly evaluated as trainers by the participants of the ImpENSA Training Programme pilot. We believe that this best proves the effectiveness of the mentoring programme in training for new competent ImpENSA Training Programme coordinators.



ImpENSA Training Programme well received by pilot participants!

Bernadeta Patro-Golab (MUW), Sunhea Choi (UoS) and Corinna Walsh (NSSA)

Four pilot groups, consisting of a total of 36 healthcare professionals, participated in the ImpENSA Training Programme pilot study. Thirty three completed two e-learning modules and participated in baseline and post-modules 1 and 2 evaluation studies, and 27 completed the full training including module 3 and participated in the post-training evaluation (October 2021 – February 2022). Most study participants were dietitians, mainly from urban setting, working either in public or private sector across the country. Using a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods, including assessments, questionnaires and interviews, we investigated the effectiveness of the training programme and the appropriateness of its delivery in SA context.

The participants reported that they had really enjoyed the 2 ImpENSA e-learning modules, with different media used, visual aids and videos, and appreciated the knowledge basis provided by these modules on micronutrient nutrition, patient-centred care and behaviour change support. They expressed the wish for downloadable materials that they could later refer to in their practice. They highly enjoyed the overall interactivity of the training. They found the online facilitated Healthy Conversations Skills training (module 3) particularly useful for their practice. The practical sessions were viewed as a great opportunity for the experience exchange with other dietitians. Despite some challenges with internet connection, many participants appreciated the online mode of training delivery via Zoom and highlighted its increased accessibility of training offered to healthcare professional in SA.

Overall the ImpENSA Training Programme was considered by the study participants as informative, enjoyable, and relevant to practice. Many of the participants suggested that other health professions (e.g. nurses) would also benefit from the training. The evaluation data we collected will serve for further training improvements. On behalf of the evaluation team, we would like to express our gratitude to all pilot study participants for their engagement and great inputs.

Feedback on the ImpENSA Training Programme

How relevant was it?

This was one of the most satisfying up to date sessions I have done

I really enjoyed the whole experience and learned a lot

Great training, very informative and relevant

How was the online delivery?

I really appreciated the online mode, since it can be done anywhere

It [online] is much more accessible as the participants were all over the country

Using different media kept the course exciting, up to date, interesting and engaging

Loved the content and interactive activities

How was the design?

Who to recommend it to?

I think that's something that should be encouraged for all of us, all of us working in health

What is next for the ImpENSA Training Programme

Lize Havemann-Nel (NWU) and Shweta Feher (LMU)

The launch of the ImpENSA Training Programme was a highlight and indeed a very exciting milestone, not only for the consortium who have put in years of hard work and dedication, but also for potential stakeholders that can benefit from the programme. However, the consortium is still actively working to ensure successful implementation of the final ImpENSA Training Programme after the evaluation has been completed (envisaged Aug/Sept 2022).

We will be extending the outreach and impact of the current ImpENSA Training Programme by upskilling ImpENSA coordinators to also deliver a face-to-face version of the Healthy Conversation Skills (HCS) module. Dr Wendy Lawrence will facilitate the face-to-face HCS conversion course from 7-9 November 2022 in Cape Town where 12-16 coordinators will be trained for this purpose. This will not only enable ImpENSA coordinators to take the ImpENSA Training Programme to more rural, remote and low-resource settings, but we will reach a higher number and a wider range of health care professionals.

Finally, we need to ensure the implementation of the ImpENSA Training Programme can be sustained in the long run. A social enterprise is being established, buy-in from stakeholders / funders is being explored, alternative avenues for implementation will be put in place, and we need to ensure the Training Programme adapt and respond to changing needs. Considering the fact that empowerment of Community Health Workers (CHWs) is crucial to achieve health goals in SA, we aim to develop this platform further by designing and delivering training programmes for the CHWs and health professionals based on unmet needs.



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