



Durban scientists took to the streets at the weekend to highlight the importance of science in society. PICTURE: ABHI INDRARAJAN

Durban joins the march of science

Kamcilla Pillay

SCIENTISTS took to the streets on Saturday to raise awareness of the importance of their discipline and research in society.

The action formed part of the International March for Science, which saw hundreds of people gather in major cities across the US and Europe.

The University of KwaZulu-Natal, the Centre for the Aids Programme of Research in South Africa (Caprisa), the South African Medical Research Council, Maternal, Adolescent and Child Health

Research and the Africa Health Research Institute joined forces to highlight the critical importance of sustained and strategic support by governments and funding agencies.

The purpose of the march, said associate scientific director for Caprisa and clinical epidemiology expert Professor Quarraisha Abdool Karim, which was likely to become an annual event, was to popularise science. It was likely to become an annual event,

"We all benefit in some way or the other from the products of science, innovation and technology but don't often stop

to reflect on how these come to be in society and what innovation and discovery led to it."

The march, she said, was part of the international event, aimed not only at increasing public awareness of the importance of science, but also to address the many challenges it can help surmount, such as climate change, food security, opportunistic diseases, and life-threatening epidemics.

"Investing in research and development is about investing in the citizens of our country. Science changes lives, shifts paradigms of thought and promotes innovative economic

progress", said the president of the South African Medical Research Council, Professor Glenda Gray.

Said the University of KwaZulu-Natal vice-chancellor Albert van Jaarsveld: "The marches worldwide not only make a powerful statement regarding the value of scientists and scientific research, but it also provides an opportunity to unite researchers globally."

Director of the Africa Health Research Institute Professor Deenan Pillay said it was essential that scientific knowledge underpinned decisions on government policy.