



**PMAC** | PRINCE MAHIDOL  
AWARD CONFERENCE **2022**

**S6**

**PANDEMIC PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE: STOPPING THE NEXT  
OUTBREAK BEFORE IT BECOMES A PANDEMIC**

## | BACKGROUND

Despite years of planning and investment since the 2005 International Health Regulations were published by WHO, the COVID-19 pandemic exposed how remarkably unprepared the world was to control the spread and recover from the effects of SARS-CoV-2. Among several analyses of what went wrong with the response, in May 2021, The Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness & Response issued a comprehensive main report of its findings and recommendations for action to curb the COVID-19 pandemic and to ensure that any future infectious disease outbreak does not become another catastrophic pandemic.

This PMAC-2022 parallel session will address some elements central to stopping the next outbreak before it becomes a pandemic. Panelists will be asked to identify enabling factors and likely barriers; and to address specific action steps to achieve the goal of preventing another pandemic.

Key themes are:

1. Investing in preparedness and coordination now to prevent or mitigate the next crisis
2. The future of broadly-acting antiviral agents and universal vaccines for coronaviruses, influenza and other high-consequence infectious agents
3. Building global manufacturing capacity for rapid antiviral and vaccine production, including mRNA-based vaccines, towards full global access
4. Establishing a pre-negotiated global platform for access to vaccines, tools and supplies

## | OBJECTIVES

To identify enabling factors and likely barriers; and to illuminate specific action steps to achieve the goal of preventing another pandemic.



Moderator

## Helen Rees

*Executive Director*

Wits RHI, University of Witwatersrand  
South Africa

Professor Helen Rees

GCOB, OBE, MB BChir, MA (CANTAB), MRCGP, DCH, DRCOG mASSAf

Professor Helen Rees is internationally renowned as an expert in HIV prevention, reproductive health and vaccines and is one of South Africa's best-known women scientists. Helen is based in South Africa and is the Executive Director of Wits RHI of the University of Witwatersrand. She is Co-Director of the Wits African Leadership in Vaccinology Expertise (ALIVE), dedicated to increasing vaccine research capacity in the African region. In both capacities, she has overseen many vaccine studies including clinical trials, socio-behavioural studies, epidemiological studies and vaccine impact studies. She is an Honorary Professor in the Department of Clinical Research at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, and an Honorary Fellow of Murray Edwards Newhall College in Cambridge University.

Helen is internationally recognised as an award-winning global health practitioner who has dedicated her professional career to improving public health in Africa, with a focus on vaccine preventable diseases, HIV and sexual and reproductive health. She Chairs the Board of the South African Health Products Regulatory Authority and the World Health Organisation (WHO) AFRO Region Immunization Technical Advisory Group. Helen has extensive involvement in national, regional and global response efforts to COVID-19 including the development of COVID-19 vaccines, their potential rollout and utilization. She is a member of the South African Ministerial Advisory Committee on COVID-19 and a member of the South African Ministerial Advisory Committee on COVID-19 vaccines. Helen is involved with the oversight of the COVAX facility that GAVI, CEPI and WHO are jointly driving. Helen has significant insights into WHO's International Health Regulations (IHR) and emergency response strategies to infectious diseases hazards. Helen chairs the WHO's IHR Polio Emergency Committee, is a member of the WHO IHR Emergency Committee on COVID-19, the WHO Expert Committee on COVID-19 vaccines, the WHO's Scientific and Technical Advisory Group on Infectious Hazards as well as the COVID19 Clinical Research Coalition Steering Committee.

Other portfolios give Helen insight into the global framework for vaccine development and access. Helen's reputation has meant that many international global health organisations have recruited her to serve on and/or chair international scientific committees and Boards for example, she is a Board member of the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI) and chairs their Programme and Policy Committee. Helen is a member of the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness and Innovation Board and chairs the CEPI Scientific Advisory Committee. She is past chair of the WHO's Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization (SAGE), and currently Co-Chairs the WHO SAGE Working Group on Ebola vaccines and the WHO's HIV Vaccine and Monoclonal antibody Technical Committee.