



STEVE TOLLMAN

BSc MA MPH MMED PhD

Steve is founding director of the Medical Research Council / Wits University Rural Public Health and Health Transitions Research Unit, responsible for its world-class health and sociodemographic platform (Agincourt HDSS) and multidisciplinary research spanning the life course. He is research professor in the School of Public Health, University of the Witwatersrand, and a faculty member of the Harvard Center for Population & Development Studies. Steve studied medicine at Wits, PPE in Oxford, and public health at Harvard and Umeå.

Returning to South Africa in 1990, Steve moved to rural Bushbuckridge, confronting pervasive challenges of poverty and inequality coupled with complex health transitions. Over decades, he led a talented team building a globally leading research institution, bringing the best science to bear where needs are greatest. The versatile research platform – covering a ‘whole population cohort’ of some 120,000 people living in over 30 rural villages – supports observational and intervention studies including policy evaluations investigating critical transitions along the life course, their implications, and context-appropriate responses.

Steve was a founder and first Board Chair of INDEPTH¹ (2002-06), an exceptional research network. As principal scientist he provided strategic direction to multicentre efforts in cause-of-death, ageing, migration and health, and cardiovascular genomics. He was instrumental in gaining government investment to establish SAPRIN, a South African network of population-based research platforms building data/evidence bases and addressing health inequalities.

In 2024, Steve was awarded a Gold Medal by the South African Medical Research Council, and in 2023, the Alumni Award of Merit from the Harvard TH Chan School of Public Health. He gained high recognition from INDEPTH, and the 2018 National Science and Technology Forum South32 award for

¹ INDEPTH: International Network for the Demographic Evaluation of Populations and Their Health

“an outstanding contribution to Science, Engineering and Technology and Innovation in management and related activities”.

Steve serves on Boards as well as thinktanks including *UCL-Lancet Commission on Migration and Health (2016-18)*, *Academy of Medical Sciences-UK Addressing the global challenge of multimorbidity (2016-18)*, *National Academy of Sciences-USA Continuing Epidemiological Transition in sub-Saharan Africa (2010-13)* and *Research and Data Needs to Meet the Challenge of Aging in Africa (2004-6)*. He contributes as chair of review panels supporting local and global health development including SA, UK, and Ugandan Medical Research Councils, Wellcome, Global Alliance for Chronic Diseases (GACD), National Institute for Health Research-UK (NIHR), and African Research Excellence Fund (AREF).