

## A short history of Neuroscience in South Africa

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Neuroscience research in Africa began with neuroanatomy and neurosurgery in north Africa over 5000 years ago. Sub-Saharan Africa emerged in Neuroscience research during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The majority of researchers who occupied this domain of research were predominantly white male with fewer white female and no representation of other races. As South Africa received independence from the colonial and apartheid era, the representation of different races emerged with gender disparities favoring males. The establishment of Neuroscience societies such as Society of Neuroscientists of Africa (SONA) and International Brain Research Organization (IBRO) which supported SONA with funding and different neuroscience programs introduced a positive change in diversity. A major shift was evident with both race and gender representation growing in neuroscience researchers. A few black males headed Neuroscience labs in different academic institutions. Which increased the number of black people showing interest in Neuroscience research. Black female Neuroscientists are still the least represented race and gender and in South Africa. This poor representation is not in the absence of government and academic institutions establishing policies aimed at correcting past injustices. However, factors such as funding, accessibility to Neuroscience programs, availability of local and international collaborators, mentors, equipment for starting up a lab are some of the few issues seen as barriers to progress. Therefore, the current question might be are we there yet? While it is important to note the progress achieved thus far in creating opportunities for woman in Neuroscience it is equally important to note the barriers preventing black woman from advancing and progressing in both research and in numbers in the space of Neuroscience in South Africa.