

## **RESEARCH and AWARDS**

### ***CBTBR co-director receives prestigious ASSAf Science-for-Society Award***

Prof Paul van Helden, from the co-director of the CBTBR, was amongst two scientists who recently received the Academy of Science of South Africa's (ASSAf) Science-for-Society Gold Medal. ASSAf awards this prestigious award annually for scholarly excellence.

Prof van Helden was, until recently, Chair of the Research and Ethics committee of the Faculty of Health Sciences of the Stellenbosch University (SU), the first person who is not a clinician and not a Dean to head this committee in its history. He is the executive head of the Department of Biomedical Sciences at SU's Faculty of Health Sciences, and head of the Division of Molecular Biology and Human Genetics. He is also the director of the MRC/SU Centre for Molecular and Cellular Biology, and co-director of the CBTBR.

Van Helden has initiated major new directions in TB research, obtained funding, found local and international collaborators, coordinated and managed the projects – all in the interests of finding new tools to diagnose, treat and prevent one of the world's most devastating diseases.

Under his leadership, the group has set out to understand the mechanisms of drug resistance; to challenge all the existing conceptual frameworks and to re-examine fundamentals; to introduce rapid diagnostics; and to assess whether drug-resistant TB cases are caused by acquisition of resistance or transmission of already resistant microorganisms.

Van Helden's contribution towards the body of science is evidenced by his extensive list of publications, book chapters and patents. There are few South African scientists who have such an excellent record, particularly in so many high-impact journals.

