

A Landmark Achievement for African Cardiovascular Research

The successful completion of THESUS-HF II - and its publication in The Lancet (DOI: 10.1016/S0140-6736(26)01657-0), represents a major milestone for the Pan-African Society of Cardiology (PASCAR) and Cape Heart Institute (CHI) for cardiovascular research in Africa. The publication reflects the strength of collaboration between African clinicians and researchers and demonstrates the importance of generating high-quality evidence that addresses the realities of cardiovascular disease on the continent. [Click here](#) to access the publication online.

Articles 

Aetiology, management, and outcomes of acute heart failure in 17 African countries (THESUS-HF II): a prospective, multicentre, observational cohort study



Karen Sliwa*, Julia Hahnle*, Simon Stewart, Shaazia Allie, Albertino Damasceno, Duard Smit, Neusa Jessen, Mahmood U Sani, George Nel, Ntobeko B A Ntusi, Chris Edwards, Koji Takagi, Beth Davison, Gad Cotter, Charle Viljoen, on behalf of THESUS-HF II investigators†

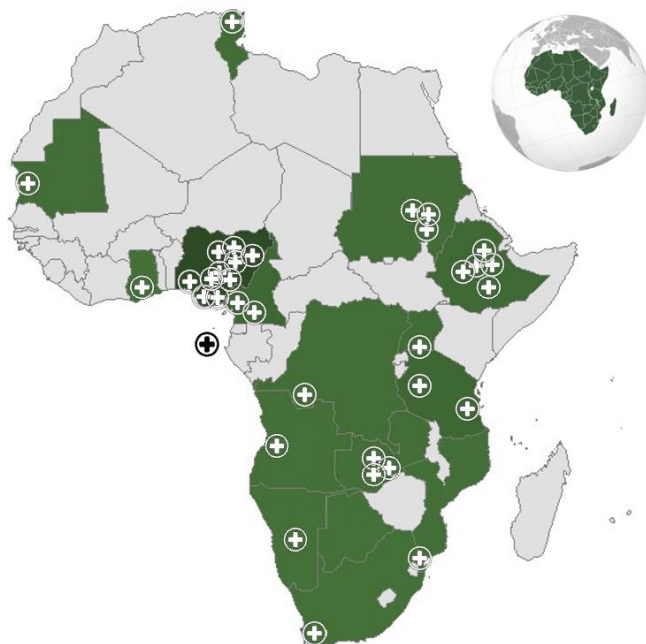


Figure 1: *THESUS-HF II across Africa* - 50 hospitals across 17 African countries participated in this landmark contemporary study of acute heart failure.

The study was coordinated through the PASCAR, which played a central role in bringing this ambitious multicentre project together, including engaging participating sites, facilitating study agreements and coordinating the study across 17 African countries. Funding and Research team was provided by the Cape Heart Institute under the leadership of Principal Investigator, Professor Karen Sliwa.

Importantly, THESUS-HF II extends beyond generating new evidence. The project is also contributing to the development of the next generation of African cardiovascular researchers, supporting two PhD students, Dr Julia Hahnle and Dr Shaazia Allie, whose research forms part of the project.

The publication of THESUS-HF II in The Lancet is therefore more than an important scientific achievement - it is a testament to what can be accomplished through African-led collaboration and investment in research capacity. It marks an important moment for PASCAR and reinforces the Society's commitment to advancing cardiovascular research, education and care across Africa.



PASCAR THESUS-HF II Study

Principal Investigator: Karen Sliwa

Co-investigator: Albertino Damasceno, Charle Viljoen, Mahmoud Sani, Gad Cotter

Sub-investigator: Neusa Jessen, Simon Stewart

www.pascar.org | info@pascar.org



CAPE HEART INSTITUTE
Global Medicine

Summary

STUDY BACKGROUND

Original findings from the THESUS-HF Study conducted more than 15 years ago, revealed that heart failure (a condition that affects the heart's ability to provide the body with the blood supply it needs) is very different in sub-Saharan Africa when compared to the rest of the world in that –

- Many younger people of working age are present to hospital with acute heart failure.
- More women than men are affected.
- Death rates are high.
- The underlying causes (including high blood pressure but not heart attacks) are varied.

WHY THESUS-HF II?

Despite the important insights it gave, the original THESUS-HF included a limited number of countries and regions in sub-Saharan Africa AND many things have changed over time – including population growth and ageing, urbanisation and risk factor profiles linked to life-style changes across the continent.

PASCAR's ability, with the critical support of UCT's Cape Heart Institute, to engage with more sentinel sites and investigators across the continent has continued to grow.

WHAT DID WE EXPECT TO FIND?

Applying the enhanced capacity of engaging clinicians and researchers from 50 hospitals across 17 African countries we first expected to gather a 'more complete picture of heart failure in Africa than ever before'.

At the same time, we expected to see a 'changing profile of those presenting with heart failure in terms of why they developed their condition and how it affected them'.

WHAT WE FOUND

As reported at the European Society of Cardiology Meeting in Munich with a simultaneous publication in The Lancet (accompanying commentary on the importance of our study), by study more than 1500 acute cases of heart failure across Africa we found:

Those most affected by heart failure in Africa hasn't changed much – Africans presenting with heart failure are still 10-20 years younger than other cases worldwide, are of working age and include a large proportion of women.

At the same time, 'heart failure in Africa remains deadly' with one in ten of those affected dying during their hospital presentation and one in five dying within 6 months of their presentation.

Alternatively, the 'pathways to heart failure in Africa are changing' – whilst untreated high blood pressure and the historical disease affecting the African population are still important factors, there is evidence that factors like coronary artery disease due to changing diets rich in fat, are becoming more important.

KEY POINTS

- The THESUS-HF II Study is the largest study of heart failure in Africa to date.
- It reveals important information on the burden and consequences of heart failure from a uniquely African perspective.
- This is important, because heart failure in Africa has a unique pattern – those affected are younger, include many more women and the pathways to the condition, whilst changing, remain different.
- Sadly, heart failure continues to be a deadly condition.

WHAT WE PLAN TO DO NEXT

PASCAR and the Cape Heart Institute at UCT, along with the network of THESUS-HF II contributors across the continent plan to publish a series of reports further revealing the impact and consequences of heart failure from a uniquely African perspective.

They will also be working to increase the number of sites and countries across the region who can contribute to future studies to better understand and respond to the challenges of heart failure and other deadly forms of heart disease in Africa in the future.

QUOTES

As commented by **Professor Karen Sliwa (Principal Investigator of the study)**: “The study's strengths are the scale, geographical breadth, a pragmatic design suited to resource-limited settings, and the first multi-country presentation-rate estimates for African acute heart failure. The project was a real team effort. I would thank all the investigators for the very time-consuming work, often in very difficult scenarios without any remuneration.”

As also commented by **Professor Simon Stewart (Co-Investigator)** – “PASCAR, the Cape Heart Institute and all the investigators across Africa, are to be warmly congratulated for completing the region’s largest and most detailed study of heart failure to date”. He further commented “Study findings are incredibly important; they reveal what has and hasn’t changed over time. Sadly, heart failure in Africa is still deadly and affects many young people of working age. More encouragingly, access to life-saving medicines is improving. The THESUS-HF II provides an incredibly important platform to support and promote life-saving heart failure detection and care across Africa.”



Dr Julia Hahnle, PhD candidate at the CHI, presented the main finding of the study on behalf of the study investigators on **Poster 85883 “The Sub-Saharan Africa Survey of Heart Failure (THESUS-HF II): Aetiology, 30- days and 6 months outcome”** on **Friday, 28 August 2026** at the world's largest and most influential cardiac meeting (the European Society of Cardiology's Annual Congress) in Munich, Germany.

Figure 2: Dr Julia Hahnle presenting at the Annual ESC Congress 2026.

Furthermore, on behalf of the Study Investigators, **Professor Simon Stewart presented the additional findings from the THESUS-HF II Study as a prestigious 'late-breaking clinical science' report at the same congress 18:15 (CET) on Sunday, 30 August.** As part of his presentation, Professor Stewart highlighted regional key differences in the pattern and consequences of heart failure across the African continent.