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MAY 2020

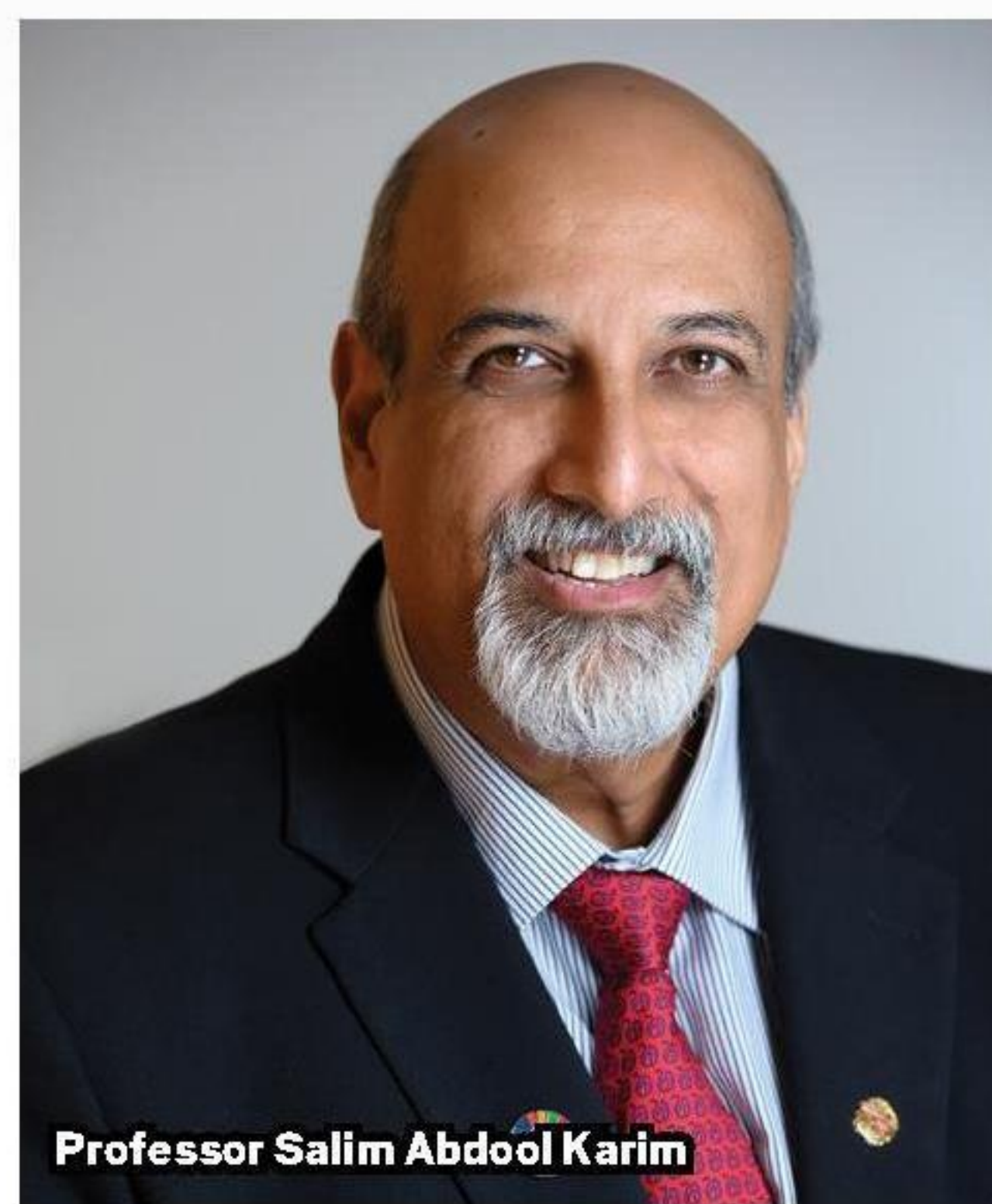
Global Health Award for SA's pioneering professors

Recognition for the discovery that antiretrovirals prevent sexual transmission of HIV, laid the foundations for pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP).

By Nicky Belseck, medical journalist

WHEN TWO YOUNG graduates began the journey of a lifetime three decades ago, they couldn't possibly have imagined the medical breakthroughs they'd have, or how their work would come to change the world.

Thirty-two years later dynamic husband and wife duo, Professors Salim and Quarraisha Abdool Karim have been named the 2020 John Dirks Canada Gairdner Global Health Award laureates. Rewarding international excellence in fundamental research that impacts human health, the Canada Gairdner Awards recognise the world's most creative and accomplished biomedical scientists who are advancing humanity and the world. The Abdool Karim's were



Professor Salim Abdool Karim

recognised "for their discovery that antiretrovirals prevent sexual transmission of HIV, which laid the foundations for pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), the HIV prevention strategy that is contributing to the reduction of HIV infection in Africa and around the world," the Gairdner Foundation said.



Professor Quarraisha Abdool Karim

CAPRISA (Centre for the AIDS Programme of Research in SA). "We don't chase the awards," Professors Quarraisha Abdool Karim (associate scientific director of CAPRISA) SAID. "But it's nice when we do get recognised. Awards like this are an affirmation of the importance of the work

TEAMWORK
"The entire body of knowledge that we've been recognised for, comprises our work to find solutions and slow the HIV epidemic in young women," said Professor Salim Abdool Karim, director of

we're doing. It's also affirmation for the large teams we work with, both scientists within CAPRISA and other health professionals that enable this research." Salim, or Slim as he is affectionately known (a nickname he picked up in school – 'Slim' meaning clever in Afrikaans) agreed. "I think getting an award like this is recognition of the perseverance that it takes to make important medical breakthroughs. They don't just happen overnight." But we are merely representatives of a massive team. We have over 400 scientists from across the world working on this problem with us. Just our Durban team is over 200 scientists – we have about 50 PhDs, and 32 medical doctors in our team. That's what it takes to really do impactful research."

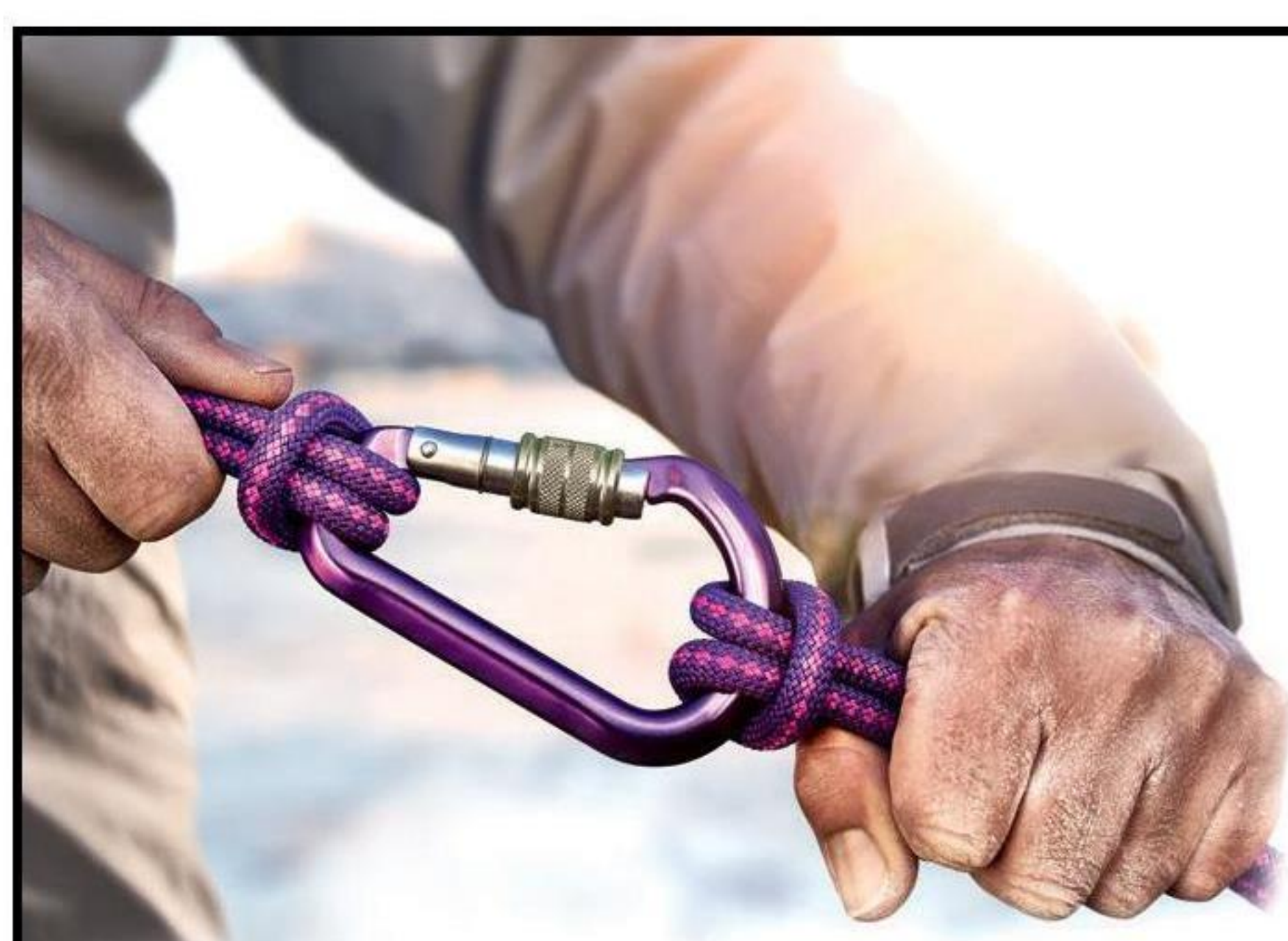
THE WORK

UNAIDS estimates that 37 million people

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PP-XAR-ZA-0071-1