



International Alliance for
Biological Standardization



The Role of Real-World Evidence for Regulatory and Public Health Decision Making for Accelerated Vaccine Deployment

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Professor Helen Rees is internationally recognised as an award-winning global health and medical practitioner who has dedicated her professional career to improving public health in Africa. Professor Rees is the Founder and Executive Director of Wits RHI, the largest research Institute at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa. Professor Rees is widely respected for her ability to synthesize recommendations from multifaceted inputs and to link research to policy and has successfully chaired many national, regional and global committees in deliberations that have changed key strategies and policies in the African region, and has served on expert structures and committees for WHO, UNAIDS, UNICEF, the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation and BMGF.

Professor Helen Rees is the Founder and Executive Director of Wits RHI, the largest research Institute at Wits University in Johannesburg, South Africa. A medical doctor by profession, Professor Rees is a Personal Professor in the University of Witwatersrand's Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Co-Director of the Wits African Leadership in Vaccinology Expertise, Honorary Professor in the Department of Clinical Research at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and an Honorary Fellow at Murray Edwards

College, Cambridge University, UK. She holds a Doctor of Science (Medicine) honoris causa from the University of London and a Doctor of Laws honoris causa from Rhodes University.

Professor Rees has served on and chaired many national and global scientific committees and boards. She is the board chair of the South African Health Products Regulatory Authority. She chairs the WHO's African Regional Technical Advisory Group on Immunization. For the past fifteen years she has played a major global role on global vaccine committees. She has contributed to the evolution of HIV and STI vaccine research through chairing or membership of WHO and UNAIDS expert committees. Combining her VPD and SRH interests, she has been PI or co- investigator on HPV vaccine studies. She chairs a BMGF committee on HPV vaccines and is a member of a WHO HPV vaccine expert committee and chairs the South African NITAG's HPV technical working group. She is co-chair on two studies exploring HPV vaccine impact among girls in communities with high HIV prevalence, and on the effectiveness of a single dose of HPV vaccine. She is the Chair of the Gavi Vaccine Investment Strategy that is developing a priority list for procurement of vaccines between 2025-2030 for the world's poorest 71 countries. She chairs the MedAccess Board which is a global organisation that identifies and funds access to neglected therapeutics and diagnostics required in low- and middle-income countries.

Professor Rees has won many international and national awards for her contribution to global health and to science, including being made an Officer of the British Empire (OBE) in 2001 by Queen Elizabeth II. In 2016 she was awarded the South African National Order of the Baobab for her contribution to medicine and to medical research. In 2022 Professor Rees was made an Officer of the French National Order of Merit by President Macron for her contribution to global health and to the COVID-19 response, and also received the Platinum South African National Batho Pele Award for excellence in contribution to the South African COVID-19 response. In 2022 she was named a 'standout voice' in African public health by Harvard Public Health.