

# Rural Health Seminar Series 2022

## *Community Resilience in the Face of Adversity: What Makes it? What Breaks It? Examining the Contributions and Limitations of Community-based HIV Peer Support to Adolescents' Wellbeing in Southern Africa.*

**Presented by Dr Sarah Bernays**

Communities face diverse and localised threats through changing environmental and economic conditions. The detrimental impact these threats are having on our mental health is garnering global attention. An emerging trend to applaud and, arguably, rely on the 'resilience' of communities to protect health and wellbeing outcomes.

To foster and sustain resilience we need to better understand it. What interventions strengthen communities' ability to adapt, recover and respond? Why and how do they work? As resilience is not fixed, what circumstances undermine the impact of these interventions?

Drawing on research with adolescents affected by HIV in Southern Africa, I explore the role of community-based peer support and how it might positively impact social and emotional wellbeing. I consider how self-acceptance, relational connection and trust are fostered within specific interventions and their potential impact on adolescents' broader health outcomes. Within this analysis, I highlight the structural conditions and macro actions that need to be in place to create and sustain 'resilient environments' for communities and individuals to thrive.

**Thursday 6 October 2022**  
**4:00pm – 5:00pm AEDT**

[Click here](#)  
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**Dr Sarah Bernays** is an applied anthropologist focused on adolescent health and infectious diseases. She conducts qualitative research to inform intervention design and conduct process evaluations within complex trials to understand the *how* and *why* underpinning an intervention's effects. Her research aim is to enhance the influence of communities to shape interventions and policies which are going to work for them. Sarah's collaborative research programme primarily focuses on HIV and mental health (Southern Africa), as well as person-centred care to Tuberculosis and COVID-19 (Vietnam). She adopts innovative, participatory approaches to engender more equitable engagement in research processes and redress inherent power imbalances embedded within global health.