

Canadian expert Dr. Nayab Sultan honoured in London for life-saving work on silicosis and lung disease

VANCOUVER, BC, CANADA, December 11, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Dr. Nayab Sultan, a Canadian occupational health leader and University of British Columbia (UBC) research collaborator, has been awarded the [Outstanding Contribution to the Global Development of Occupational Health](#) 2025 by the Society of Occupational Medicine (SOM) in London — one of the world’s most respected recognitions in the field. The award was presented today at the Royal College of Physicians in the UK.

Dr. Sultan was honoured for his groundbreaking work in southern Sub-Saharan Africa, where he has led major initiatives to address silicosis, silicotuberculosis, and tuberculosis (TB) among former mineworkers — a vulnerable and historically underserved population facing some of the highest rates of occupational disease in the world.

According to the SOM, his work has directly impacted “a two-million-strong cohort across Eswatini and the SAMA network,” drawing overdue attention to deep and long-standing health inequities.

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In partnership with the University of British Columbia, Dr. Sultan secured a CAD \$600,000 research grant to pilot AI-driven early detection tools for silicosis and TB — offering life-saving potential for early diagnosis in resource-limited communities.

This collaboration positions Canada as a key contributor to global innovation in occupational health, aligning with national priorities in health equity, worker protection, and AI-enabled research.



“This award is a recognition of the mineworkers and families whose voices have been ignored for far too long,” said Dr. Nayab Sultan. “Canada has a unique opportunity to lead globally — combining research excellence, ethical innovation, and our commitment to health equity. I’m proud that our work with UBC is helping build early-detection solutions that can save lives and shape fairer systems of care.”

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Silicosis and TB remain among the most severe occupational diseases worldwide, especially in mining communities:

- Silicosis deaths exceed 40,000 per year globally (WHO/ILO estimates).
- Mining-exposed workers are 3–7 times more likely to develop TB.
- Silicotuberculosis — the convergence of silicosis and TB — has mortality rates far higher than TB alone.
- Former mineworkers across southern Africa are disproportionately affected due to decades of dust exposure, inadequate surveillance, and fragmented compensation systems.

In Canada, while incidences are lower, silicosis remains a persistent issue in mining, construction, foundries, and engineered-stone fabrication. Provinces such as BC, Ontario, and Quebec have reported rising cases among younger workers, with [WorkSafeBC](#) calling respirable silica “one of the most serious occupational exposures of our time.”

Dr. Sultan’s work positions Canada at the forefront of international responses to this crisis — especially timely given the country’s growing attention to silica hazards in construction and manufacturing.

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Beyond research, Dr. Sultan has been a leading advocate for improved compensation systems, access to care, and policy reform for ex-mineworkers and their families. His work has influenced regional health diplomacy and mobilized governments, NGOs, and health organizations to prioritize occupational lung diseases as a human-rights issue.

The SOM selection committee noted that his contribution stands out for its scale, sustainability, and deep commitment to social justice.

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Dr. Sultan is a Canadian occupational health researcher and consultant whose work spans global health systems, respiratory disease prevention, AI-enabled diagnostics, and health equity for marginalized workers. Over the course of his career, he has worked in more than 60 countries, supporting governments, NGOs, and global health agencies in strengthening occupational health systems and protecting vulnerable worker populations. His new consulting practice focuses on evidence-based occupational health solutions, global

health strategy, and cross-sector partnerships.

More information: www.nayabsultan.com

Occupational Medicine Society (OMS)

Founded in 1935, the Society of Occupational Medicine is the UK's professional body for specialists in work and health. Its annual Occupational Health Awards recognize leading practitioners, researchers, and organizations improving worker health globally.

More information: <https://www.som.org.uk/>

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