



# A Policy Analysis of Comparative Medicine in South Africa: An African Regional Perspective,

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## Abstract

Comparative medicine, the study of health and disease across species, offers substantial benefits for biomedical research and public health. In South Africa, its advancement is shaped by distinct regional factors, including a high burden of infectious diseases, significant biodiversity, and systemic healthcare inequities. However, its incorporation into national health and research policy remains underdeveloped and inconsistent. This policy analysis critically examines the status of comparative medicine as a field in South Africa from an African regional perspective. It aims to identify the principal policy drivers, barriers, and gaps affecting its development and integration into the wider health research ecosystem. A qualitative document analysis was undertaken. This involved reviewing national and regional policy documents, strategic frameworks, institutional reports, and published literature pertaining to health research, veterinary science, and One Health. A thematic analysis was applied to identify prevailing discourses, priorities, and structural factors. The analysis identified a dominant thematic focus on comparative medicine as a tool for infectious disease and zoonosis research, which marginalised its potential applications in other areas such as non-communicable diseases. A principal finding was the persistent institutional and funding silos separating human medical and veterinary research sectors, constituting a major barrier. Policy support was often aspirational but lacked concrete implementation mechanisms. Comparative medicine in South Africa remains an underdeveloped field within formal policy frameworks, despite its clear relevance to regional health priorities. Its potential is hampered by fragmented governance and a narrow conceptualisation of its utility. Policymakers should formulate an integrated national strategy for comparative medicine, explicitly aligning it with One Health agendas. Increased investment in cross-disciplinary training and dedicated, collaborative funding streams is necessary. Establishing formal platforms for sustained collaboration between human and animal health research institutions is essential. Comparative medicine, policy analysis, South Africa, One Health, research governance This analysis provides a structured examination of the policy landscape for comparative medicine in South Africa, highlighting critical systemic barriers and offering concrete recommendations for its integration into national and regional health research agendas.

**Keywords:** *Comparative medicine, policy analysis, One Health, African regionalism, translational research, zoonotic diseases, South Africa*



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