

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to acknowledge the following people with heartfelt gratitude:

- My supervisors, Professor Derick Raal, Professor Ernie Song and Mr Ronnie Immelman for their invaluable assistance, guidance and support throughout the duration of my research.
- Sister Nancy Holden and Sister Nomsa Ramela of the Day Ward for their assistance with the collection of some specimens.
- The Research Incentive Fund and the Division of Endocrinology and Metabolism for the funding of this project.
- To all my loved ones, especially my parents, thank you for everything!