



Media Statement  
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For Immediate Release

### **Students from Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University offer Physiotherapy services at the 96<sup>th</sup> Comrades Marathon**

Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University has once again sent a group of 44 final year Physiotherapy students to the Comrades Marathon to provide pre and post marathon physiotherapy services to athletes that will be taking part in the close to 90 kilometer run taking place on Sunday 11 June 2023.

These students accompanied by three of their lecturers have already provided muscles pre – conditioning services, therapeutic massages and soft tissue mobilization services to athletes since yesterday Friday 09 June 2023 at the Comrades Marathon Expo centre in Durban.

Karabo Raphokoane, a lecturer in cardiothoracic rehabilitation explained that the SMU students under their supervision will also proceed and be stationed at the end point of the race on Sunday 11 June to provide post marathon services to athletes. “It is in this end tent where the students working with other professionals will do a lot of rehabilitation, deal with most severe muscle cramps, severe joint stiffness and also attend to cases of cardiothoracic emergencies where emergency physiotherapy will be provided and resuscitations performed if necessary”, she added.

Triage services are also performed by these students and their lecturers to ensure that patients are thoroughly checked to determine the urgency and nature of treatment they require at the finishing line. If the diagnosis indicate that they require urgent treatment, they can be referred to the medical section to get a drip or undergo cardiothoracic protectiveness where oxygen or any other treatment can be provided to protect their heart and lungs.

What these students do is linked to the training they receive during their studies at SMU as they are exposed to the different areas of Physiotherapy such as; neuromuscular, cardiothoracic sports, muscular skeletal sports and others. While runners would have done the necessary preparations that determined their fitness, Raphokoane warns that anything can happen in the middle of the race due to other environmental factors such as weather changes, runners catching flu and other illnesses and their cardiothoracic system may take a strain as a result of such conditions and advices them to be alert of such conditions.

Ntombenkosi Sobantu who also lectures the students in orthopedic rehabilitation explained that some athletes suffer acute injuries or fractures after the marathon as their muscles would have been overworked. The muscles react differently as if running away from an injury and get into a spasm as a protective reaction. The students will then ensure that the RICE method is applied where runners have to rest, use ice, perform compressions and elevation. "Mental and emotional strength is required for athletes to complete the marathon and athletes should work as a team and help one another along the journey. They need to realize that the body is connected and functions as a system", added Ms Sobantu.

Ishmerelda Mabena-Segoe, a lecturer in Orthopedic Manipulative Therapy, with many years of experience in sports physiotherapy added that the profession should be seen as a first line profession and explained that all of these students are taught to diagnose during their training, through observation, assessment and testing and will be applying all they learned during training to handle runners at the end of the race.

The lecturers warned that Hypothermia cases are often seen at the end of the marathon where the body temperature of athletes drops below the level of where it should be and they appear vigorously shocked and in such cases, they assist the runners to restore their normal temperature and ensure they keep warm and release them once they are stable.

**Issued by Communication and Marketing**

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