

Newsflash!

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SMU Lecturer appointed to serve on the Professional Board for Physiotherapy



SMU Physiotherapy Lecturer, Dr Makwena Sibuyi was recently appointed by the Minister of Health, Dr Joe Phaahla to serve on the Professional Board of Physiotherapy, Podiatry and Biokinetics of the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA). Her appointment is effective from 31 January 2024 until 31 October 2025.

Her appointment as a board member is informed by Regulations Relating to the Constitution of the Professional Board of Physiotherapy, Podiatry, and Biokinetics published on Government Notice R1246 in the Government Gazette 31633 of 28 November 2008. "The professional board requires a composite of five physiotherapists of which the majority should be coming from a group of people that were previously disadvantaged, such as women. The process entailed being nominated by physiotherapists whose names appeared in the registers of physiotherapists and have a valid postal address in the Republic of South Africa," explains Dr Sibuyi.

She holds a Bachelor of Science in Physiotherapy (WITS), Master of Science in Physiotherapy (WITS) and Doctor of Philosophy in Physiotherapy from the University of Pretoria. She is currently pursuing a Postgraduate Diploma in Health Science Education at WITS. She is a School of Health Care Sciences' Teaching and Learning Committee member. In addition, she is a scientific committee member of the 7th Annual Africa Interprofessional Health Conference 2024.

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Her responsibilities as a board member are not only confined to her physiotherapy profession, but expand to other health professions such as podiatry and biokinetics. "My responsibilities are rooted in the Regulations relating to the functions and functioning of the Professional Board [Regulation No2]. I will be serving within the various established committees (Education, Training and Registration Committee, Committee of Preliminary Enquiries, Practice Committee, Biokinetics Internship Committee, and the Executive Committee) to guide the health professionals and to protect the public," she further stated.

As a lecturer, her responsibilities entail being a fourth-year course coordinator; teaching paediatric physiotherapy modules for all year levels (from first to fourth year), reviewing the paediatric curriculum; supervising students at clinical sites; supervising undergraduate and postgraduate research; participating in community engagement activities and conducting research. She gives details on how her appointment will affect Physiotherapy offerings at SMU. "The knowledge and experience that I will acquire from the Professional Board will influence operations and inspire change at the level of the SMU Physiotherapy Department. Particularly with academic challenges relating to the education and training of physiotherapy students, curriculum reviews and reinforcing guidelines for student-staff ratio."

Given the platform as a board member, there are key issues that affect the Physiotherapy profession that she believes need to be addressed urgently. She alluded that the key challenge is the distribution of physiotherapists in the public sector. Further stating that "There is a high proportion of physiotherapists serving in the Department of Health compared to those serving in the education sector. This imbalance is attributable to the increasing number of qualified physiotherapists not being retained post-community service year. Provincial Departments of Education, particularly, in rural provinces need to open more posts to ease off the pressure from health departments and appoint physiotherapists with similar benefits to those provided by the Department of Health."

She hopes that her appointment is a positive move towards her growth at the HPCSA and Institutions of Higher Learning. She welcomes her appointment into the Professional Board and knows that she is just the person they were looking for.

