SEFAKO MAKGATHO HEALTH SCIENCES UNIVERSITY

FOCUS on SMU

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International collaboration between SMU and the University of Nottingham to build a multilateral front against Gender Based Violence

By Maditsi Matlala

Dr Moreoagae Randa, a lecturer in the SMU Nursing Science Department embarked on an initiative that culminated in a ground-breaking collaboration between Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU) and the University of Nottingham (UoN) around Gender Based Violence (GBV).

GBV includes physical, sexual, verbal, emotional, and psychological abuse, threats, coercion, and economic or educational deprivation. A scourge of our times, it is widespread not only in South Africa, but also worldwide. It is a common denominator across race, nationalities, and health care professionals globally. Healthcare professionals are mostly the first contact point for victims seeking medical care and assistance.

Dr Randa got the Newton Travel Grant, whilst in the final stages of her Ph.D studies on GBV. The British Council (BC is UK's International Organisation working in the cultural relations and educational space) identified UoN as a suitable higher education institution for her studies.

It funded her scholarship to study at UoN and dedicated Dr Julie McGarry to mentor her. Dr McGarry is an Associate Professor in the School of Health Sciences, at UoN and also the Chair of the Integrated Research Group (Domestic Violence) within the Institute of Mental Health. Randa's studies at UoN provided her the breakthrough and the match paved the way for the collaboration, with the SMU.

Randa decided to sell the idea of collaboration with UoN to Professor Lekan Ayo-Yusuf, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research, who supported the initiative and paved the way for the eventual arrival at SMU. The research team from UoN, comprising Dr Julie McGarry, Dr Kathryn Hinsliff-Smith, Dr Heike Bartel and Dr Gill Langmack, attended the meeting.

Speaking at this meeting with UoN research team, Prof Ayo-Yusuf said that collaboration with UoN was part of SMU's internationalisation agenda. He added that the cooperation would go a long way to increase research output with regional and international impact.

The UoN representatives, who are experts in their own right, bring multiple skills. They expressed their determination to share their insights and experiences to enrich the GBV campaign in the country within Dr Randa's study.

Professor Hlengiwe Mkhize, the Deputy Minister in the Presidency: Women, Youth and People with Disabilities presented the Government perspective regarding the issue of GBV. Prof Mkhize welcomed the collaborative initiative and pledged support to this initiative.

The meeting culminated in a ground-breaking declaration of intent to contain GBV. The hope is that this collaboration will, in the end, serve as motivation to the establishment of a centre or an institute within the SMU, for GBV.

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549 people benefit from the SMU and SAVIC Influenza Vaccination Drive

The South African Vaccination & Immunisation Centre (SAVIC) and the Division of Public Health Pharmacy and Management, in collaboration with the Gauteng Department of Health, Tshwane District Health Services, had recently implemented a flu vaccination drive aimed at the Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU) community, and residents and staff of the Mothwa Haven Old Age Home in Eloffsdal, Pretoria.

"As a result of this campaign, 549 people received the flu vaccine - 488 at SMU, and 61 at Mothwa Haven. The majority of SMU vaccinees were female (66.9%), with 90.6% being students and 7.4% being staff. Surprisingly, 2% of vaccinees came from the community surrounding SMU. These community members happened to be in the vicinity on the day, and decided to take advantage of the opportunity. At Mothwa Haven, most vaccinees were staff members (75.4%), with residents making up 24.6% of those vaccinated," said Mr Kesentseng Mahlaba, a lecturer from the Division of Public Health Pharmacy and Management, who initiated the influenza vaccination drive.

Influenza vaccination is a high priority, as an outbreak of flu can have a negative impact on students' academic performance and furthermore place a huge burden on our healthcare system. "Students need to protect themselves, their peers and the many patients they interact with in the hospital as part of their practical training," advised Prof Hannelie Meyer, Acting Head of the Division of Public Health Pharmacy and Management.

Influenza can be a very severe disease, resulting in hospitalisation and in some cases deaths. In South Africa between 6 000 to 11 000 die every year due to influenza. SA influenza season is usually from May to August, but can start as early as April, and end as late as September in some years. "SAVIC encourages people to get their annual influenza vaccination as soon as possible after the vaccine arrives in the country, which is usually in March each year. However, the vaccine can still be administered throughout the influenza season, as long as stocks last," emphasised Prof Burnett, the Head of SAVIC.

According to Prof Meyer, the flu vaccine can be given from six months of age. It is especially recommended for the elderly, pregnant women, babies born to HIV-positive women, immunocompromised patients and healthcare workers. The first four groups are at high risk for influenza-associated complications, resulting in severe disease, hospitalisation and death. Healthcare workers are a high risk group because they are more exposed to influenza than the general population, and transmit influenza in the healthcare setting, thus placing their patients at risk.

Prof Meyer further indicated that because University students are commonly in close contact with one another in communal areas such as residences, lecture rooms, sporting events and at social events, they are therefore exposed to an increased risk of contracting influenza and further spreading the disease.

"Moreover, an unhealthy diet, lack of sleep and limited exercise can weaken their immune systems, making them more susceptible to flu. Individuals with allergies to the flu vaccine or any of its ingredients, should, however, consult their physician prior to vaccinating," Prof Meyer said in conclusion.

Mothwa Haven: *Pharmacy and SAVIC team with staff from Mothwa Haven*

Public Health Empowers Health Professionals

By Tumelo Moila

The Department of Public Health (DPH)'s face-to-face contact is integral to teaching and learning, where students and academics debate on current public health issues, during the annual winter and summer school programme. Compulsory classroom teaching takes place during the programme, which is two weeks on-campus blocks at the beginning of each semester for the Master of Public Health programme, one week on campus block for the Post Graduate Diploma in Public Health, and face-to-face seminars for the doctoral programs.

Public Health students attending winter school.

During the summer and winter school face-to-face blocks, students are introduced to:

- The online teaching platform through laboratory sessions.
- The discipline of public health.
- Semester courses.
- Laboratory sessions for biostatistics and epidemiology.
- Lab sessions for qualitative and quantitative data analysis.
- Introduction to research methods.

The DPH has successfully achieved to prepare public health professionals to, critically assess and resolve the public health problems facing Africa through its online courses. “The online approach has enabled the Department to produce the highest number of MPH graduates compared to other MPH programmes in South Africa. It is also the only programme in the country that offers the doctor of public health (DrPH) degree. In the May 2019 graduation ceremony, the Department graduated 26 Postgraduate Diplomas in Public Health, 61 Masters of Public Health, and 3 Doctor of Public Health graduates,'' said Prof Mathildah Mokgatle, acting HoD: Public Health.

Since its establishment, the DPH has become a platform for research and training, offering doctorate and masters education focusing on areas such as Social and Behavioural Health Sciences, Epidemiology, Occupational and Environmental Health Sciences, Biostatistics, and Health Systems Management and Policy. The academic programs range from postgraduate diploma to a doctorate in public health. Currently, four programmes are running:

- Postgraduate Diploma in Public Health (PGDGPH).
- Master of Public Health (MPH).
- Doctor of Philosophy in Public Health (PhD).
- Doctor of Public Health (DrPH).

The DPH continues to offer all its programmes and courses online to accommodate working health professionals in the SADC region. Besides South Africa, professionals are from Botswana, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Swaziland, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

The unique way of offering courses online allows students to study at their own pace, in their own homes and countries, and thus enable professionals from various disciplines to find solutions for public health problems in Africa and apply them in their communities. “Online teaching forms a significant aspect of the programme (80%), is based on the principle of continuous learning, and places heavy emphasis on student interactions with the course facilitators and fellow classmates.,” said Prof Mathildah Mokgatle.

Public Health students attending winter school

Meet **Mr Eugene Makhavhu** – Mover, Shaker & Trailblazer

SMU Nursing Lecturer, Eugene Makhavhu was recently named among the movers, shakers and trailblazers in the 2019 #MG200Young South Africans. He was among more than 6 000 applicants and fortunately he made it into the top 200 prestigious list. #MG200Young list is testament to how driven South Africa's youth is. ***Focus on SMU reporter, Tumelo Moila*** had a one on one interview with Mr Makhavhu to know more about his vision and career development.

1. How do you feel about being among the #MG200Young South Africans?

It still feels a little surreal. I literally had to read the profiling more than once. But it is truly an honour and a humbling experience. It challenges me to want to do more in my profession and to impact change. It instils professional growth. Especially coming from a point where there were 6 000 nominations from a population of more than 12 million young people of South Africa, and being chosen amongst 200 best. I am truly proud of having been a part of the 2019 cohort.

2. What is your vision for your academic career?

I would like to see myself grow as a professional and as an academic. By so doing, I believe I can be able to contribute much to the profession. I feel that nursing is highly underrated and it is up to us as young nurses to uplift the dignity and the respect that nurses once enjoyed within our communities. I'm totally chuffed to be a part of this university and the future certainly looks bright. I am currently studying towards my PhD and I hope to finish that in the coming years.

3. What persuaded you to choose Nursing as a career?

I sometimes say that nursing chose me. I remember when I went to the Tshwane University of Technology to apply, the application form had three options of studies. My first choice was nursing and I did not know what else to choose on the other two spaces. After I completed my undergraduate studies and started with my masters' degree, people would ask why I do not study medicine, and my answer would always be "I am right where God wants me to be".

4. Your CV indicates that you have worked extensively in the nursing field, how do you apply your experience to execute your duties to the best of your abilities?

I was fortunate enough to have had the opportunity to experience some different spheres within the nursing profession ranging from maternity, Intensive care, high care, nephrology, programme management, and education. I have had times where people told me not to go work in a specific place, but just by someone saying so, I get the stronger urge to go to that "forbidden" place. The aim is not to replicate myself, but to inspire someone to be even greater and much better than I am.

5. What is your message to our readers?

Visualize the future. Be the best that you can be. Have a vision board. In my computer I have a draft of how my C.V would look like in the next 5 years and that is a challenge I put for myself. I also have a cover page of my PhD Thesis (Which I am still doing). The only thing that stands between you and your greatness, is YOU.

Meet Mr. Solly Mpolaise - Manager of Employee Relations

By Tumelo Moila

Mr. Solly Mpolaise was recently appointed as the new Manager: Employee Relations. His main purpose as the Manager, is to provide a professional employee relations service to the SMU workforce, through the effective application of legislation, policies and procedures, as well as the training of all stakeholders, in adhering to the law and policies and procedures of the University. “My vision for this position is to deliver a holistic employment solutions and also facilitate engagements with all stakeholders. I will make sure that we address the work place conflict and concerns of all SMU employees,” said Mr Mpolaise.

His key performance areas include and not limited to delivering holistic employment relations solutions that increase the effectiveness of SMU and facilitate the engagement of employees to empower the university to achieve its objectives, and actively contribute to a harmonious working environment; actively support the University strategy in the achievement of its people management strategic objectives and overall HR policy framework; Provide an advisory service to line management through coaching, advising and providing tools to effectively manage employment relations, including disciplinary and grievance matters; Develop, implement and maintain an effective case management system to include disciplinary cases, grievances and CCMA/Labour Court cases; Oversee the Occupational Health and Safety function and ensure adherence with the legal and regulatory requirements, amongst others.

Mpolaise is ready to restore the confidence of workers in his office by maintaining confidentiality in the case management system. “I have 19 years' experience in this field. Confidentiality is key for me and I always operate under one important value which is trust. People must have confidence in my office and that whatever will be discussed will remain confidential,” he explained.

He will implement the provision of an advisory service to line management through coaching, advising and providing tools to effectively manage employment relations, including disciplinary and grievance matters. He said, “Discipline is a management function, not Employee Relations function. There will be empowerment of management in dealing with conflict and conduct disciplinary actions in the sense of corrective, not punitive measures. I am in a process of drafting a process flow, which need to be incorporated- into a disciplinary policy,” he remarked.

He concluded by saying he envisages that through this positive engagement there will be positive impact to all employees for the betterment of this institutions.

SMU NEWS BRIEFS

Ms. Lebogang Rebecca Phasha, Final year Bachelor of Nursing Science and Art student, was duly elected as the Provincial Deputy Chairperson of Democratic Nursing Organisation of South Africa (DENOSA) Student Movement, in Gauteng province. Her term of office is from 2019-2021. Prior to her election, she was the 2018/19 Alternate Convener of the Provincial Task Team. In 2016, she was the Secretary of SMU branch of DENOSA Student Movement. "As a woman, it means a lot to be elected because women are seen as followers than leaders. Collectively with my fellow committee members, we would like to change the negative image of the nursing profession since nurses are the heart of the health care system," said Lebogang.

Aobakwe Tumelo Sebelebele (22), final year Bachelor of Science student at Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU), was recently crowned Miss Mabopane 2019/20. "My role as Miss Mabopane 2019/20 is to engage with Mabopane community, which I have been a part of since I was young. I would like to uplift the youth from my community. One of the social ills that I have noticed in Mabopane is that only a handful of young people grow and develop as envisaged. So, I am looking into establishing programmes that will help them to develop certain skills and improve their lives and families. As a sport fanatic, I am also looking into introducing sport and recreational activities for the youth. It will assist them to avoid becoming vulnerable and contributing to the social ills the community is exposed to," said Aobakwe.

Victor Ozoh (24), fifth year Medicine student at SMU, was recently crowned the senior male u90kg champion at the *USSA Bodybuilding 2019 championships, held at Vaal campus of North West University. "I was in tears immediately after getting off the stage after the 4th, 3rd and 2nd places were officially announced because automatically I knew that I am the new champ, breaking a two-time USSA champion's winning streak," said an elated Victor. He further said, "Honestly, I was in disbelief because the two-time USSA champion was announced as a runner-up and I was the last man standing. Thus said, I would like to thank God, my coach, team and all those who believed in me". In 2018, he obtained 2nd place in the u23 category at USSA Bodybuilding Championships.

Four SMU female students studying MBChB, were awarded PPS Foundation bursaries to cover their fees. The students expressed their sincere gratitude towards the Foundation, which is known for nurturing potential.

Rixongile Chauke said, "I am grateful to PPS Foundation for sponsoring my studies. They are really nurturing potential".

"I am overly grateful to the PPS Foundation, for making a dream of a black girl from a disadvantage background come true, and I am finally seeing the great professional I am going to be because of PPS Foundation" said Refilwe Thubakgale.

Mokgadi Mohlabeng said, "Thank you to the PPS Foundation for sponsoring my studies. I am overwhelmed and grateful".

"I would like to stretch out my utmost gratitude to the PPS Foundation for making it possible for another black child. I will forever be grateful," said Masehwane Mahubane.