SEFAKO MAKGATHO HEALTH SCIENCES UNIVERSITY

FOCUS on SMU

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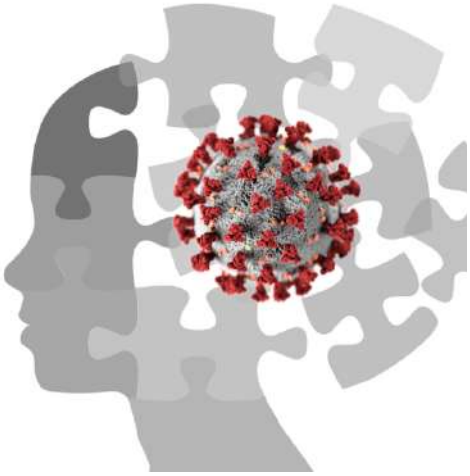
The Stance of Psychosocial Team on COVID-19



As a Psychosocial team, we are aware that a student tested positive for COVID19 and that contact tracing was done immediately. It therefore means that even though one student is infected, others are affected, evoking fear on other students.

The scripts of students are different depending on their own experiences and will therefore be seen on an individual basis.

Dealing with Covid-19
As a matter of urgency, the team would therefore like to make amendments of its services by prioritising and focusing more on Covid-19 as a way of addressing the pandemic as follows:

Primary requirement
Students are urged to abide by the rules and regulations of Covid-19 and ensure that they follow them to the latter as outlined by the Minister of Higher Education to avoid being infected (wearing of masks, sanitising, social distancing, completing a daily symptom screening etc.).

Secondary requirement
Should a student by any chance, be inflicted or affected by Covid-19 and would like to utilize the services of the Psychosocial team, they are free to do so. The details of each member are given below.

Psychosocial support
In light of the prevalence of Covid-19 with regard to students, the Psychosocial team is prepared to support students who are not coping. In addition, the team suggested that a short script below be prepared for students who need it.

Once students have been identified, appointments will be scheduled for them to see their respective psychosocial supporters. As already indicated in the past, students should have access to a conducive venue, where they will be able to engage in a session.

Dealing with fear during Covid-19
In this case, fear is an unpleasant emotional state that is caused by Covid-19 and could affect the livelihood of students adversely.

The power of now:
- Embrace or welcome how you feel (e.g. Do not criticize or judge how you feel).

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- Use your mind, be mindful or become aware of your thoughts. (e.g., Thought: I can manage this pandemic with my PPEs).
- Your thoughts will determine your feelings (e.g., Feeling: I therefore do not feel intimidated or I am not scared.)
- -Your thoughts and feelings will affect your behaviour (Implementing Covid-19 regulations)
- Be mindful or become aware of your environment and surroundings. (e.g. The precautionary measures I need to take in my space and in public places).

SMU Psychosocial Team:

- Dr Fikile Nkabinde
  Mobile: 081 852 5361
- Mr Mashudu Muthala
  Mobile: 072 461 2348
- Mrs Corlia Du Preez
  Mobile: 072 687 1898)

SMU Alumna Establishes her own Mayonnaise Brand

By Tumelo Moila

In the wake of the Coronavirus pandemic, SMU alumna, and entrepreneur, Konanani Phandavhudzi (23), expanded her passion for cooking into the establishment of a mayonnaise brand, *Handmade by Kona*. The brand was officially launched on 22 May 2020, successively making a store debut in the richest square mile at Roast Republic, Sandton, and the Redd Door Café, Edenvale (Gauteng). “We firmly believe that *Handmade by Kona* has already started its journey in becoming a trusted household brand, and thanks to every business/family that welcomes our product into their scullery, and pantry,” said the sole owner of the newly established brand, named after her TshiVenda first name Konanani, which means unite or relate.

The SMU BSc Applied Mathematics (Honours) graduate is a professional business analyst with a demonstrated

history of working in the financial services industry. She is applying personal working experience to her advantage, as she pushes the brand towards lofty heights. “We were able to expand after a month and two weeks into the ecommerce for nationwide deliveries. Our retail price is R30 per 450 gram bottle, including delivery costs.
To place orders, please visit our website ***https://handmadebykona.co.za/,***” explains Konanani.

Business enterprises usually face hurdles in their maiden year of existence, and *Handmade by Kona* is not an exception to the norm. “Our first challenge was making distributions in all nine provinces. Fortunately we were able to introduce an ecommerce as a solution. Secondly, the supply and demand for our customers was becoming a nuisance, until we hired an extra person to assist with the production load. We have chefs who curate meals using our product. Soon we will have our own production house and able to supply the largest stores, and also venture into export trading”.

Konanani models her business/work ethics on mentor, Lizl Steck, whom she credits for empowerment on business values. “She is my all-rounder mentor. I would basically talk to her about work, my struggles and life in general. She taught me to acknowledge my shortfalls, and seek help, instead of allowing empty pride, to stand on my path of potential success”.

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, Konanani is lending a hand in feeding the needy through the donation of her mayonnaise, as part of the food parcels distribution. Her parting words are more advisory for fellow business hopefuls. “If you have business interest in any field, go for it and do thorough research. Reading is the most powerful tool for acquiring information. Career wise, always have a curious mind, always open to learn, and lastly to business owners, knock at all doors, you never know which one will open. I always say to myself that even if I have an unpleasant experience, I will continue knocking on 100 more doors, with the likelihood that one will definitely open. Against all odds, giving up is not an option,” concludes the Maniini (Venda) born Entrepreneur.

Meet **Dr Nontobeko Mncwangi –** The Custodian of Medicines

By Tumelo Moila

Growing up in an environment where two different belief systems of traditional and western medicines are practised, triggered curiosity, and influenced SMU alumna Dr Nontobeko Mncwangi to pursue a career in Pharmacy. Choosing a career in Pharmacy was almost a natural progression for Dr Mncwangi, this was inevitable given the stigma associated with traditional medicine use. Growing up, I always had a question, "is the medicine we get from the Pharmacy/Doctor's rooms really different from the traditional medicines, hence my interest in Pharmacy," recalls Dr Mncwangi, Senior Lecturer at the Department of Pharmacy Practice (SMU School of Pharmacy).
Her inquisitiveness developed into a special interest in medicinal plants, which she advocates for. "I believe that they are part of our heritage as Africans and it is one of the tools we can use to trade in the Knowledge Economy. There is a stigma attached to the use of medicinal plants, so to demystify this practice, one needs to aggressively advocate for the placement of herbal / traditional medicines in the health care system as a whole" she said.

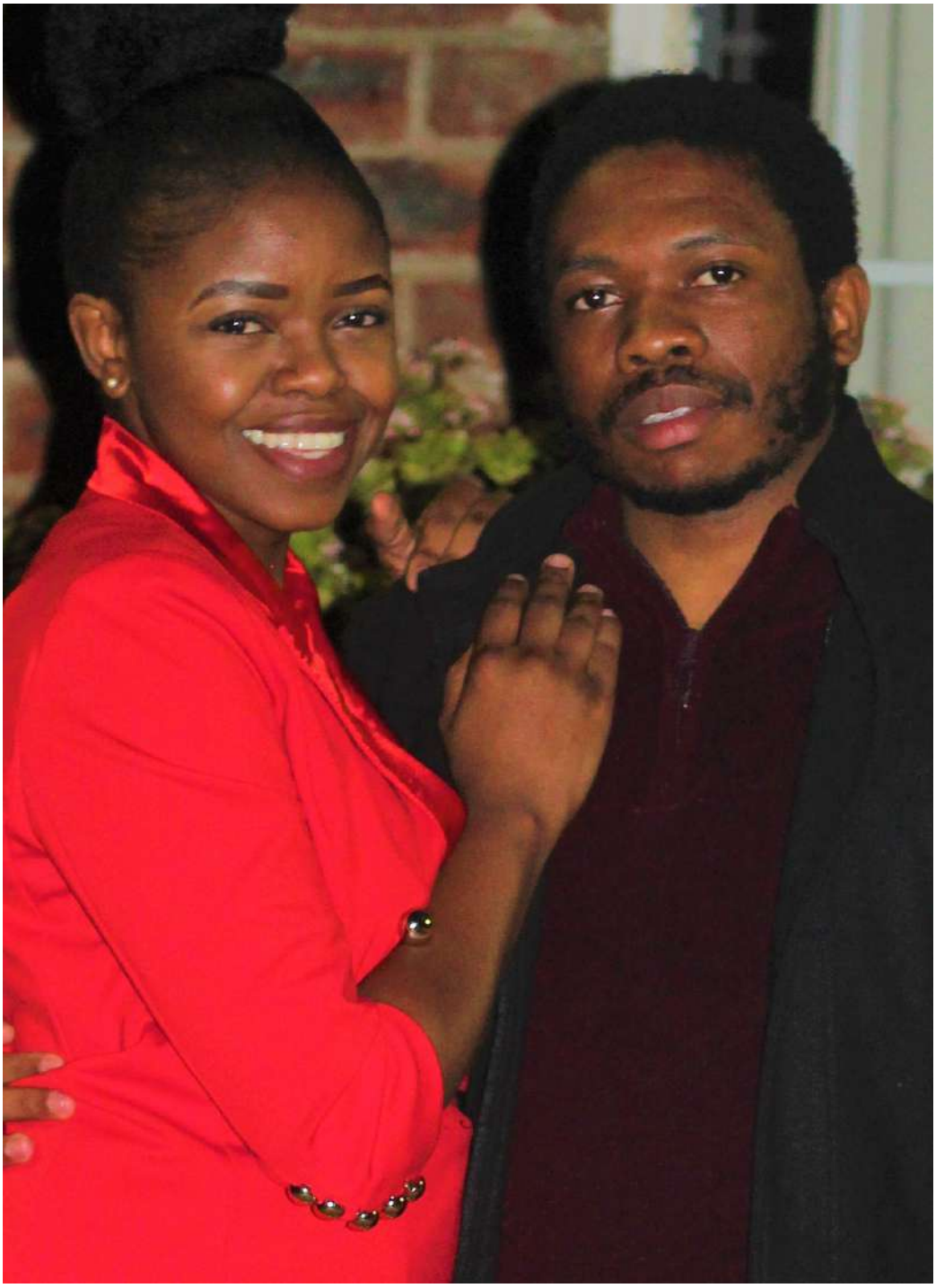
One of the ethical duties of a pharmacist is that of being a custodian of medicines. "Thus, removing the stigma from the use of traditional medicines through public education interventions and also proving through scientifically sound methods that these do work, is an ethical responsibility for pharmacists. In that way, there is no discrimination whether it is western or traditional, because our population is prone to use both, sometimes simultaneously which may have unwanted interactions thereby causing side-effects, some of which may be fatal," shares Dr Mncwangi.

August is Traditional Medicine Month, with 31 August being the day of commemoration, as stipulated by the World Health Organisation (WHO), South Africa as a member state commemorates and celebrates the contribution of traditional medicines to the health care system as a whole. However, there is a lot that needs to be done in terms of regulating traditional medicines. WHO estimates that 80% of the population uses traditional medicines one way or the other, there is also growing awareness in the use of natural therapies, in particular herbal products, and international trade has increased world-wide. "Seeing that people are now seeking more natural or organic therapies, I think it's best to position oneself accordingly to ensure that these traditional medicines are safe, efficacious and of good quality.," emphasises Mncwangi.

As a result of the surge in coronavirus cases, Dr Mncwangi is kept busy with curious people wanting to know the impact of the traditional medicines in treating and healing the pandemic. "People who know my background have been getting in touch with me asking for my opinion on the use of *'umhlonyane / lengana' (Artemesia afra).* There is anecdotal evidence that it works, however no scientific studies have been done to prove its efficacy. In conclusion, Mncwangi appeals for funding and functional laboratories to conduct thorough research on traditional medicines.

Mr & Mrs Letsoalo – The Physiotherapists

By Tumelo Moila



SMU Alumni, Mr Tshepo Letsoalo, and his wife Fulufhelo Ndou-Letsoalo, match the description of the proverb, great minds think alike. The Limpopo born power-couple met at SMU in 2013, and are synonymous with winning multiple awards. They are both employed as Physiotherapists, at Jubilee District Hospital (JDH), in Hammanskraal, north of Pretoria. Seven years later, their relationship is still going strong, married, and blessed with a daughter, Tumisho. SMU Alumni newsletter reporter, Tumelo Moila, held an exclusive interview with the couple.

Tumelo Moila (TM): What persuaded you to choose a career in Physiotherapy?

Tshepo Letsoalo (TL): "Growing up, I saw my beloved aunt diagnosed with stroke which is a disability, became able through physiotherapy sessions, and I just loved the magic. The quality of life and independence of the person we nearly lost, surpassing all those boundaries, just planted a seed of hope in me. I started imagining myself as the one giving hope to the hopeless, redefining disability as adapted ability.

Fulufhelo Ndou-Letsoalo (FNL): My sister, Grace Ndou who is a Professional Nurse, persuaded me to study Physiotherapy, as it is a good career path. I have a passion of helping people, and improving their quality of life. Giving someone hope is an amazing feeling, and having to see one recover, due to my hard work is more encouraging.

TM: Why you did specifically decided to study at SMU?

TL: SMU is well known for producing best healthcare practitioners in South Africa, and I could not let the

opportunity to pass me. Again, its fees accommodate all people from different socio-economic backgrounds, especially the poor. The systems in place are friendly, and supportive to study.

FNL: I was introduced to SMU by my friend, Mantoa Peu. I then applied because I loved the environment, which later proved to be peaceful and conducive for studying. In short, SMU is a home away from home.

TM: Name all awards you have won in your career?

TL:

- ***2016 to 2019:*** Acknowledgements certificates for being a Physiotherapy team player at JDH.
- ***2016/2017:*** Best Physiotherapist in Patient Care, Statistics, and with less absenteeism at JDH.
- ***2017/2018:*** Tshwane District's Best Employee for Quarter 4, Best Allied Practitioner, Overall 2nd Best Employee, Best Top Six Employee at JDH.
- ***2018/2019*** – 2nd Best Allied Practitioner, and Best Physiotherapist in Statistics at JDH.

FNL:

- My 2018/19 awards at JDH
- Best Physiotherapist in Patient Care.
- Overall Best Employee in the Physiotherapy department.
- Best Physiotherapist with less Absenteeism.
- Best Allied Health Practitioner at JDH.
- Overall Hospital Best employee at JDH.

TM: To date, what are your career highlights?

TL: Consistent service excellence in the health field; certified as the Best Practitioner in the entire Tshwane; being appointed as a Deputy Chairperson and Quality Assurance Manager of Continuous Professional Development (CPD), at JDH, and being appointed as a Supervisor for Physiotherapy Students, doing their clinical training.

FNL: All my achievements, including being a proud SMU graduate, who continues to represent it to the best of my abilities, at my workplace and beyond.

TM: What are your future career prospects?

TL: I am definitely eyeing the CEO's position, at a certain hospital. As I continue to work in the health field, I have grown great interest in management. I have done consultation on a management related course to pursue, so that I fulfil my career prospect.

FNL: I would like to further my studies, either specialising in Orthopaedics or Management. Probably, I will one day also become a CEO, at one of the hospitals.

TM: Who do you consider as you role model?

TL: My mother, Maria Letsoalo is my role model, cheerleader and motivator. As I was growing up, her priorities were beyond my understanding. She did her best to make sure that her children's education is sufficiently supported. She groomed me to believe in myself. Today, I am a confident gentleman, with an amazing personality, and all praises to my mom.

FNL: My parents, Samson and Edna Ndou are my role models. They have taught me about love and perseverance. For as long as we involve God, no matter what the challenges we face, love always wins.

TM: What attracted you to your colleague and partner?

TL: In January 2013, my wife Fulufhelo Ndou-Letsoalo and I, met in the bus from SMU to South Point Student Residence. She and her classmates, were one grade lower than me, and wanted help with skills preparation for Applied Physiotherapy course, which I offered to help. I then became friends with her, and more individual consultations followed. We became fond of each other, spent more time together, studying and eventually dating. On the 22nd of April 2013, I then proposed to her, so we upgraded our friendship to become a couple, the feeling was mutual. Luckily, we both had same interests, vision, mission, and compatible personalities. On the 27th of April 2019, I sent my family for lobola negotiations, and the two families were then officially united, hence our marital status of customary marriage.

FNL: In addition, our relationship is still going strong because we always involve God. Like any other relationship, we come across challenges, however we face them head on, and always support each other, through thick and thin. Our relationship has grown significantly in the past seven years, and we are fortunate to be working together at JDH.

TM: What advice can you share with our readers regarding your career journey?

TL: They should be ambitious and believe in themselves. Embrace challenges as they come, grab opportunities, set and monitor goals. Love what they are doing, and it will definitely love them back.

FLN: Never forget the reason you came to the university, and don't forget where you come from. Study hard and you will thank yourself later. University is a totally different world, which teaches independence. Personally, I grew remarkably and learned a lot, from different people I met on campus, more especially my husband.

Dr Sandeepa Singh - Humble Background is no limit to dream

By Maditsi Matlala

Dr Sandeepa Rajbaran Singh's journey towards the appointment as Head of the Department of the Maxillofacial and Oral Radiology (MOR) at SMU began in the year 2000 when she qualified as the first black student to have been awarded the SADA (South African Dental Association) Gold Medal in Dentistry at the University of the Western Cape (UWC).

MOR is a discipline in dentistry which focuses on the diagnostic imaging and interpretation of 2d and 3D radiographs of the maxillofacial region. It is a discipline that integrates into all clinical disciplines within dentistry to facilitate quality, holistic patient care.

After completing her community service as part of the South African Red Cross Flying Doctor Service she joined the private sector. While in private practice, she continued to study and obtained qualifications, with academic accolades, in Human Resource Management and Interceptive Orthodontics. Her insatiable appetite for knowledge then lead her to register for a Master's Degree in Nuclear Medicine, Radiology and Odontology at the University of Pretoria.

Her research focused on the use of radioactive isotopes as tracers within the field of Dentistry. She was awarded her Master's Degree with distinctions. She was awarded an international fellowship and a prestigious health sciences award. In the years that followed, she focused on honing her skills in MOR. In time, her hard work was recognised and it culminated in her appointment as the Head of the MOR, at SMU.

While having enjoyed many successes along her academic path she has also grown from the challenges that she has had to overcome. Her humble rural community background and limited funding challenges did not limit her ability to dream to become a dentist thereby breaking the stereotype of the burly male dentist and the myth that dentistry is a discipline practiced in isolation. She attributes her feet to the support of her family, friends, colleagues and mentors who recognized her potential and constantly encouraged her.

As Head of the unit Dr Singh is committed to establishing a unit characterized by excellence in the fields of teaching and training, research and quality patient care through mentorship and student-centred initiatives. She envisages harnessing the power of the fourth industrial revolution to improve the learning experiences for both students and staff and to facilitate meaningful research collaborations nationally and internationally which translate into better patient experiences of health care.

Fact Sheet:

Diet/nutrition pertaining to the COVID-19 pandemic

1. Currently, there is no diet that can cure or prevent COVID-19.
2. No single food can boost your immune system, eat a variety of food different food contain different nutrients which are all important for a well-functioning immune system.
3. Having a balanced diet that comes from whole grain carbohydrates, lean meats, fish, low fat dairy products fruits and vegetables, and healthy fat such as raw nuts, mixed seeds, avocado, olives is crucial for an optimum functioning immune system.
4. Vitamin and mineral supplements are not always necessary for an optimum functioning immune system. You can still meat your nutrition requirements through whole foods, please speak to your dietitian.
5. Self-prescription of supplements can be dangerous as some high doses of vitamins and minerals can suppress the immune system, while some can lead to toxicity.
6. Get medical and nutritional advice regarding COVID-19 from reliable sources like your health care providers, at least they are regulated by law. The internet has lots of nutrition and medical gimmicks that can lead to ill-health.
7. Drink at least 6-8 glasses of water daily for optimum hydration.
8. Omitting dairy and meat from your diet is not going to help in treating COVID-19, continue having them in moderate amounts, our bodies need nutrients such as calcium, vitamin D, protein and iron from these food groups, omitting them from the diet will do more harm than good.
9. Overdosing on *Artemisia afra (lengana/ umhlonyane)* can be fatal by causing liver and kidney failure.
10. Get a little sunshine for vitamin.
11. Wear your mask, wash your hands, sanitize and stay at home.

Complied by:
Moloko Mehlape,
SMU Alumna, Part-time Lecturer & Dietitian.