



# Minister Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma

joined the Women's Month  
commemorative event at SMU



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Foundation



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educators from Queensland

# Minister Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma

## joined the Women's Month commemorative event at SMU



Minister in the Presidency responsible for Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma came to SMU at the invitation of the Vice-Chancellor Prof Peter Mbatlana on 25 August 2023 to give a keynote address to staff and students as part of the Women's month programme organized under the theme "Accelerating socio-economic opportunities for women's empowerment". Minister Dlamini-Zuma is a seasoned public representative who has served in all the democratic administrations in South Africa since 1994 under the Presidency of Nelson Mandela and the first woman to serve as Chair of the African Union Commission.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor Prof Tandi Matsha-Erasmus welcomed Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma to SMU on behalf of the VC and thanked the Minister for making time to speak to members of the SMU community. Speaking during the event, the DVC remembered the heroic deeds of the 20 000 women of 1956 who marched to the Union Buildings to protest against the proposed amendments to the Urban Areas Act. She further said that the concept of generation equality is a global phenomenon that links South Africa to the global efforts to achieve gender equality by 2030. "In a country that has seen a spike in Gender-Based Violence and Femicide, and other social ills, we must work together to empower women and create opportunities in academia, politics, business, and beyond", said Prof Matsha-Erasmus.

During her keynote address, Dr Dlamini-Zuma said she was deeply honoured by the University's invitation to speak on Women Empowerment for their collective advancement.

"Gender inequality and discrimination have had a profoundly detrimental effect on women and society as a whole. It has particularly hindered the utilisation of humanity's collective intelligence and talent in confronting some of the most pressing developmental challenges we face today. From climate change and hunger to pandemics and the digital divide, we have all been found wanting. To the extent that we continue to sideline

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### CONTACT US

E-mail: [phaladi.seakgwe@smu.ac.za](mailto:phaladi.seakgwe@smu.ac.za)  
**Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University**  
Molotlegi Road | Ga-Rankuwa | Pretoria 0204



women from decision-making, access to skills development and the control over the levers of the economic power, society will not reach its full potential”, said Minister Dlamini-Zuma.

She also cautioned that there is not a single country that has successfully developed and advanced whilst remaining indifferent about the ongoing structural exclusion of women and their right to self-actualisation.

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“Women do not only make up more than half of the population, they ensure the continuation of the human race. Therefore, not to empower women is to effectively under-develop and disempower humanity as a whole”, emphasized the Minister. She challenged Women, youth, and persons with disabilities to get educated and acquire skills. “Education and skills are the fastest equalizers. We must make sure we take every opportunity to go to school in the STEM areas of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics so that we can be innovators. We can use our creativity and be able to put our hands on the levers of economic power in this country”, emphasized the Minister.

Despite persisting challenges, the Minister indicated that they were improvements in some areas such as in education, where access has improved significantly. “We are not there yet and greater efforts still need to go into ensuring that young women enjoy equal access to education and skills development at all levels. In health, the extension of free primary healthcare for pregnant women and maternity leave in the workplace are milestones in our struggle for gender equality.

In parliament, for the longest of time Helen Suzman was once the only woman serving there. After 1994 we have made significant progress. Women now constitute just under 50% of MPs, whilst the governing party has a strict policy of 50/50 representation in parliament”, she further explained.

On the question of financial inclusion and the economic empowerment of women, the minister focused on what other emerging economies are doing to empower women.

She highlighted that a number of women throughout the continent still lack access to reliable sources of finance and

credit for a number of reasons. She drew parallels to what other relatable economies have done to help women such as in Bangladesh where Microfinance Institutions (MFIs) have been the catalyst in agitating for the financial and economic empowerment of women. “Grameen Bank provides small loans to the poor, especially women, without requiring collateral. This initiative has not only made financial services accessible to millions of women but also promoted entrepreneurship”, she said. This is an indication that Trust-based lending can be successful, and women can uplift their communities if they are given access to resources.

“Similarly, in the Philippines, women's access to secure individual savings accounts has made a world of difference in empowering women, regardless of their circumstances. These savings accounts, opened and used to accumulate savings for business investments and other entrepreneurial endeavours, have led to increased economic-self-reliance, increased sales and increased profits especially for vulnerable women in turbulent times”, she said.

Minister also highlighted that in Kenya, innovation around Mobile Banking has opened up a world of opportunities for women from all walks of life, particularly those in the rural periphery.

Talking about Gender Based Violence and Femicide, Minister Dlamini-Zuma said, “In addition to the triple discrimination suffered based on race, class and gender, African women are faced with a wave of Gender-Based Violence and Femicide. This level of violence and marginalisation has, in turn, undermined meaningful efforts to achieve a more humane society that is capable of living up to its actual potential”. She called on SMU women to form structures that will help deal with GBV and Femicide and committed that her office will assist in this regard.

She used the opportunity to congratulate government for successfully hosting the 15th BRICS Summit and commended the summit's declaration and its emphasis on the importance of empowering women economically.

SRC Treasurer General Thato Phasha spoke about women in leadership and said “A woman is the greatest gift one can ask for because we are the carriers of life. Everything we touch or invest in comes to life. But looking at the world, it becomes the most

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difficult thing. I would like to emphasize how strong we are as women given or not given the platform. We can make the change that is required”.

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She indicated that the importance of women in Leadership is part of striving for equality. “We need to encourage each other and support all women into leadership roles regardless of whether they are students, staff members or parents to prepare us for the uncertain opportunities that lie ahead, and the current ones. To be at the forefront of these social economic issues, we ought to strive to sit at the table and represent all women in this country, because we have the strength and ability to do so”, Thato added.





# Launching the Prof. ET Mokgokong Foundation: *Celebrating a legend*

The 19th August 2023 will, undoubtedly, remain etched in the books written about South African (medical) history, because it witnessed the launch of the Prof. ET Mokgokong Foundation, in partnership with Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU). The Foundation was established with the grand plan of building a Fund that will benefit our students, said Dr Zakes Motene.

Indeed, Prof Mokgokong must be a very influential man. How does one begin to explain that both the Golf Day which took place on the 17 August 2023, in the build up to the launch of the Foundation on the 19 August 2023, saw in one room medical practitioners from across the country, representatives from SMU Council and Management and representatives from South African corporates gathered to celebrate and support the launch of the Foundation? The launch indeed received many congratulatory messages from many quarters.

In his congratulatory remarks the SMU Vice Chancellor, Prof. Peter Mbatlali said, "On behalf of the broader university community: the university Council, management, staff, students and our alumni, I wish to warmly congratulate you Prof. Mokgokong on the occasion of the launch of the Professor Ephraim Thibedi Mokgokong Foundation. Your dedication, singular focus and commitment as a beloved and respected University leader and the first black vice chancellor of our great institution, has culminated in this rare honor – the launch of a foundation in your name".

Any South African who has, for whatever reason, visited a doctor or medical practitioner would be pardoned to think that all doctors in the country were trained at Medunsa; and that this was the only university in the country where such training was provided. This is because whilst visiting a consulting room, we were often greeted by a plaque indicating that Medunsa is where the consulting doctor or medical practitioner had studied.

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Furthermore, any discussion about medical/health sciences would be incomplete if such does not mention the name of Prof. Ephraim Thibedi Mokgokong. This is the man who became the Vice Chancellor of Medunsa, now called Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University.

As history would tell us, Medunsa was established in 1976 to address both the underrepresentation of blacks in the health professions in South Africa under the apartheid regime. During this period, the university trained most of the black physicians, dentists, veterinarians, and allied health professionals and placed great emphasis on community service and preventative medicine.

In response, as he began narrating the developments leading to the establishment of the Foundation, his academic and leadership pursuits, with a sense of humour, he said “Once they said to me, Prof. we got the Foundation, I started thinking. Actually what is a Foundation? I went to the Oxford dictionary to look for the meaning of foundation. The first descriptions of a foundation we all know. A foundation of a building. That's where it starts. But it goes on to talk of a foundation of an institution, a way of thinking, a way of doing things and so on. And I looked and I said, this is a mighty thing to create. And I felt so belittled that its made in my name”.

Given the many years he spent in Higher Education leadership, Prof. placed great emphasis on the importance of education, further stating that education is the basis of wisdom, and that if you don't have it you can do nothing.

What was evidently clear in his speech was the need for educational reforms, stating that prior to 1994, together, with some of his peers they talked about the need for education which starts before preschool to identify talents to be channeled accordingly. This, he said, is something that the Foundation could focus on; exploring the possibilities of changing the pattern of education in South Africa.

In his mind, without meaningful education, this country will never be free because there will always be poverty, and there will always be unemployment.

Challenging higher education institutions, he stressed that universities must conceptualise degrees that are meaningful to the development of this country, and forget about trying to do what the Americans or Chinese are doing, because these may not be what this country needs.

Given that he is a health practitioner, Prof. could not end his speech without addressing health matters in South Africa. To this end, he shared an instance where as Vice Chancellor of Medunsa he more than doubled enrolments to ensure an increase in the production of the number of health practitioners in the country. Of course, there was an outcry, but he forged ahead.

Addressing the critical aspect in the provision of health services, he shared his views on the NHI, stating that although he



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believed in it, it can never work whilst the health system is in a dysfunctional state.

The magnitude of the event was further underlined by the keynote address delivered by retired Judge Dikgang Moseneke who in his speech, amongst other things, commended Prof. Mokgokong for his contribution in the training of health professionals in the country. He indicated that audience that Prof. was never in any political podium, but the reverberating impact he has had on society is evident.

Reflecting on what matters in the development of institutions, and his invitation to serve on the Medunsa Council, Judge Moseneke said, "As we celebrate you and your sparkling life, boss, that is truly exemplary, we also know that the revolution you talked to me about and its relationship with education when you invited me to the Medunsa Board, is anything but over".

In this regard he emphasized the need to protect our institutions, indicating that good institutions will always outlive politicians and bad leaders. Hence, the need to protect those institutions that we have built because in that way we are going to advance societal goodness. In his appeal to those given the responsibility to lead the Foundation Judge Moseneke emphasised that institutions are

born in joyous moments. "But if we don't look after them they die. That is the law of nature. So leaders of the Foundation should be a pair of safe hands. They should steadfastly remember that, indeed, there are young people who would require the training that all of you had".

This was indeed a remarkable event, celebrating a legend. To this end, Prof. Mokgokong's concluding remarks were more telling of the leader that he is when he said, "I am a Mathematician. I never talk of a challenge. Because if you talk of a challenge it brings you to a mental fear. I talk of a problem, and all problems have a solution in Mathematics".

These remarks were indeed profound, and were so clearly interwoven with an equally profound statement by Judge Moseneke who sounded a warning indicating that...

***"Good leaders always give; bad leaders always take"***



# Eron “Reno” Gordon – Doctor of Philosophy in Dietetics

**A**mid the gang violence and drug abuse where he came from, SMU Human Nutrition and Dietetics Lecturer Dr Eron “Reno” Gordon eluded social pressures, to accomplish his childhood quest of becoming a Doctor of Philosophy in Dietetics. His PhD research topic focused on the Development of dietary guidelines based on nutritional assessment and challenges experienced by spinal cord-injured endurance hand cyclists. The research adds to the body of literature as it has practical implications for health professionals and guides them to provide nutritional advice to spinal cord-injured athletes.

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“To develop the dietary guidelines my research was comprised of multiple components, the first was to assess the nutritional status (dietary intake, body composition and bone mineral density) of the spinal cord-injured hand cyclists. The second was to interview the hand cyclists to understand the physiological and nutrition-related challenges they experience and how this impacts their eating practices as well as their exercise capacity. Thirdly a systematic review with a meta-analysis to explore the existing literature on the body composition of spinal cord-injured athletes. These components then fed into the proposal of the dietary guidelines for the spinal cord-injured hand cyclists,” said Dr Gordon.

He further highlighted that there are no dietary guidelines for spinal cord-injured athletes that are based on their nutritional status, or physiological and nutrition-related challenges they experience. The practice is to adapt dietary guidelines for able-bodied athletes to spinal cord-injured athletes.



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“The nutritional advice one provides to a spinal cord-injured athlete needs to be different from the advice one would give to an able-bodied athlete. The reason for this is that due to their injury, spinal cord-injured athletes have lost some of the bodily functions that able-bodied athletes have,” enlightens Gordon.

He reflects on the challenges associated with PhD studies. “One thing I learnt in my PhD is to never compare your PhD progress with that of others. Each PhD is different as the research topic and research process is different for each student. When one begins comparing themselves with others who may complete their studies on record time, you may get disheartened and discouraged. But the key is to focus on your studies and why you are doing your research without comparing yourself to others”.

Now that he has completed his PhD studies, his next step is to become a Professor that impacts the lives of students. “It is always good when I walk into a mall and then I hear someone calling my name and when I look, it is a former student who wants to greet and catch up. Rather than having the experience of a student seeing you in public but avoiding you as he or she did not have fond encounters with you on campus. So, for the goal of Professor, the aim is to publish more while developing and impacting students’ lives”.

Interestingly, like many students from disadvantaged back-grounds, he did not know what he wanted to study but he knew that he wanted to go to university. “I chose Nutrition as it sounded interesting but knew little about it. Once I was in the programme, I developed an interest in it specifically sport nutrition,” he concluded.



# Thabisile Mavis Ndlovu – Doctor of Philosophy in Pharmacology

**S**MU Pharmacology lecturer Dr Thabisile Ndlovu was born and bred in Ermelo Mpumalanga. After completing her matric in 1995, she was selected to join the group of teachers who were recruited to be trained in preparation for the “Curriculum 2005” (an initiative by the Department of Education). She studied for two years at the Siyabuswa College of Education in Mpumalanga. She did not finish the course because she wanted to pursue her dream of a career in science and technology. She then

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registered for a diploma in Analytical Chemistry at the then-called Technikon North West, now Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) - Ga-Rankuwa campus.

After completing her diploma in 2001, she got an opportunity to do her experiential training at the then Medunsa, now SMU in the Chemistry department. In 2002 she joined the Photobiology Laboratory, Pharmacy Department (SMU) as a Research Assistant and worked there till July 2008. During this time, she furthered her studies and achieved a B Tech Honours degree at TUT as well as an MSc in Chemistry at SMU. She moved to the Pharmacology and Therapeutics Department, as a Senior Medical Technologist, and started as a lecturer in 2013.

Recently, she graduated with a Doctor of Philosophy in Pharmacology as part of growing, developing and empowering herself and contributing to the scientific pool of knowledge. The professorship is her next goal, as she will focus on research as well as her duties as an academic. Focus Reporter interviewed Dr Ndlovu to get insight into her PhD studies and career.

**In brief, what is your PhD dissertation all about? What impact does your research add to the body of knowledge?**

The project was about developing a biodegradable drug carrier (poly-lactic acid), using waste cellulose as an alternative and renewable resource for the production of bio-pharmaceuticals. It included degrading waste cellulose (in this project, waste paper) with cellulase enzyme extracted from brown garden snails. Cellulase enzymes are responsible for breaking cellulose down into fermentable sugars such as glucose, which can further be utilized as a feedstock for the production of biopharmaceuticals.

Solid waste accumulation is also a concern for many global communities and such is the effect of garden snail behaviour on certain actions of the farming communities, as well as experienced by many dedicated gardeners. Utilizing the cellulase enzyme system in snails for saccharification of waste paper would not only address the issue of clean energy resources as the sugar released from waste paper, can be fermented into bio-fuels and be used as a feedstock for bio-product development. Solid waste volumes could be managed more effectively and the garden snail cellulase could be applied in the development of environmentally friendly chemical processes. The nucleus of the uniqueness of this research is linked to the utilization of enzymes isolated from garden snails of which the results already have been published in five accredited scientific journals.

**How did you develop an interest in Chemistry / Pharmacology?**

When I was growing up I always wanted to know how things are created and modified. I would wonder about things like how is salt made, how spices are made and before they were spices what did they look like. Then my love for research grew more and more. Being in the Health institution for so many years, I therefore developed an interest in medicine, hence my interest in Pharmacology with nano-cellulose biomedical applications which is related to my PhD work.

**Why did you choose a career in academia?**

I would like to believe that destiny propelled me to academia. When I look back and remember that I was at some point training to be a teacher even though I did not finish the course. Irrespective of my love for science and technology, in the end, I ended up being involved in teaching and learning.

**What is your research niche area?**

Drug carriers and drug delivery systems from renewable resources with future research focused on the development of nano-cellulose as a drug carrier medium.

**By nature, you are a hard worker, what keeps you going and executing your responsibilities to the best of your abilities?**

I am a very ambitious person. I do not stop dreaming and I believe that "if I can dream it, I can make it". When given a task I try my best to do it with excellence because if I have to give someone a task I would expect the same. I have been through many tribulations and I think what makes me always pull through is that I do not forget my dreams and I believe that as long as I'm willing to do something then there is a reward, they say "The most effective way to do it, IS TO DO IT"

**What challenges did you experience during your PhD studies?**

Working full-time and doing research at a PhD level was very challenging. There is still a lot to be done in our institution as far as infrastructure for research is concerned. It was challenging to need certain equipment to optimize our output, and only to find that we do not have it.

**In conclusion, how did you manage to balance your studies, work and family activities?**

As a single mother, it was very challenging. It required long working hours. By the grace of God, there was always a way to manage.



# Rethabile Nkuna – Doctor of Philosophy in Physiotherapy



**S** MU Alumni and lecturer Dr Rethabile Nkuna said she was compelled to do PhD as part of her growth within the Department of Physiotherapy, as most of her colleagues have already obtained the qualification. She also wanted to give back to her country of birth, Lesotho as the research will change her nation's soccer players' lives, they will be equipped to prevent and rehabilitate their injuries, and further contribute towards their socio-economic development.

## **What is your PhD study all about and what impact does it add to the body of knowledge?**

The Development of a Physiotherapy Model for Injury Prevention and Rehabilitation for Lesotho Premier Soccer Teams created a generic model for Lesotho Football Association (LeFA) teams. This research will contribute towards the injury prevention and rehabilitation of LeFA soccer players; - it will provide an opportunity to organize human and non-human resources necessary for the successful implementation of the developed model. I a

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hopeful that this research will further contribute to starting conversations about the importance of inter-ministerial and Interprofessional collaborations toward the Nation-building of the Basotho.

### **Kindly describe Dr Rethabile Nkuna to our readers**

Rethabile Dineo Nkuna is the only child of the late Matooane Donald Mokhochane and 'Maseetsi Alice Mokhochane. She was born in Tšitsong, Mphaki, and Quthing Lesotho. She started her primary schooling at Tšitsong Primary School, Seforong Primary School, and Sekhonyana Primary School. She went to the following high schools; Eagle's Peak, Masitise, and Machabeng high school. She furthered her studies at the National University of Lesotho, doing a Bachelor of Sciences (Biology and Chemistry). Later came to the Medical University of Southern Africa (Medunsa) to do Physiotherapy. Then, further continued her studies with the University of Limpopo for her Master of Science in Physiotherapy. Lastly, and most recently obtained her PhD qualification with Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University.

### **What prompted your interest in Physiotherapy?**

I did know a thing about Physiotherapy, and I had intentions to study Medicine, however, after doing my BSc with the National University of Lesotho, I was given a post of assistant physiotherapy at Queen Elizabeth II Hospital in Maseru. I worked for a few years and came to Medunsa (now SMU) to further my studies. Working at the hospital helped to make a clear decision about my career path. Working closely with doctors made me realize that I want to provide health care differently from what doctors do. As a physiotherapist, you need to be able to build trust and rapport with a wide variety of people across the lifespan. With Physiotherapy there are a lot of face-to-face interactions with a host of different patients. I found myself thoroughly enjoying both the depth and length of conversation I was able to have with patients. I loved how physiotherapists had the time to allow patients to tell their whole stories and feel heard. Given my values, character, and personality, it seemed to be a great fit for me.

### **What propelled you to choose a career in academia?**

I have always had an interest in working in academia but I did not know how. The opportunity came up for a clinical tutor in 2011 and I took it. Another thing practising as a physiotherapist is demanding physically as one grows it become difficult to match the demand. In addition, academia provides a more versatile environment that allows for student teaching, clinical skills training, research, and community engagement that I so thoroughly enjoy.

### **Your journey to a professorship**

Becoming a professor is the academic demand. Now that I have Ph.D. I have to apply for promotion to become a senior lecturer. One has to become an associate professor and later a full professor. All these levels have specific requirements for each university. One would be fooled to think that by having Ph.D. you have reached the pinnacle, you just beginning the proper journey of academia. Presently I am planning to apply for a senior lectureship, and after 2 years apply for associate professor and another 2 years apply for full professorship.

### **What challenges did you experience during your PhD studies?**

The challenges I experienced when doing my PhD, I lost my mother-in-law and father within a space of three months. It was not easy to deal with the loss and that delayed the process of qualifying.

Travelling to Lesotho for data collection was demanding, as one was travelling long distances, leaving my children alone for a long time. If there were family demands and challenges that could not be relegated or delegated, I couldn't just go to Lesotho, I had to rely on my research assistants to support me as we had to continue working.

I used my sabbatical for data collection which delayed the writing-up process. Writing up was difficult with a lot of pressure from the department, I had to deal with the reality of expectations that "we expect you to be done with writing up as time was allocated". I had to use the Saturdays and Sundays to come to the office, here at the University, and write to cover up the lost time. (As a mother children were not taken care of, and my husband also had to support me). I was exhausted most of the time not keeping up with the day-to-day office work, being a mother and wife plus writing up was truly taxing. I also had no social life and hardly went to church, that was devastating.

### **How did you manage to balance your studies, work and family activities?**

It was very difficult to balance work and family, especially after losing the helper. I had to rely on my eldest daughter to assist the siblings with homework. One colleague of mine once advised me to be a mother at home and leave the office work in the office, "as you do not want to get PhD alone without family". This is what I used to do and it delayed progress so much.

The background is a solid light purple color. Several pink flowers, likely dahlias, are scattered around the text. One is in the top right, one in the middle right, one in the bottom right, and one in the bottom left. There are also some blurred pink flowers in the top left and middle left areas.

**Focus  
on SMU**  
*Women*

# Meet Dr Refilwe Mokgatlha

the first black female to  
qualify as a Prosthodontics  
Specialist at SMU

**- and one of the few black women  
in the country**

**D**r Refilwe Mokgatlha was born in Lehurutshe and raised in Gopane village in the North-West Province. She went to Mmabatho High School, where she was in a boarding school for the entire duration of her high school years until the completion of matric. “As a young girl, I enjoyed being there for others and assisting them. I was also a bookworm, and in high school through the assistance of our guidance teacher at the time, I knew I wanted to be in health care. There were three professions in health care that I liked; in standards 9 and 10 (currently grades 11 and 12) we were required to accompany working people in the fields we were interested in for some time. Dentistry became my first love”, says Dr Mokgatlha.

Dr. Mokgatlha holds various qualifications at undergraduate and post-graduate levels. She holds a Bachelor of Dental Sciences Degree (BDS, University of Witwatersrand); a Post-graduate Diploma in Endodontics



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(PgDipDent, University of Pretoria); Master of Dental Science in Prosthodontics (MDS) and a Master of Dentistry in Prosthodontics (MDent, Prosthodontics) attained at Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University - the first black female to achieve this qualification at SMU. She is a member of the International Team of Implantology (ITI) and the Academy of Prosthodontics South Africa (APSA) and is currently a part-time lecturer at SMU. Her key responsibilities involve lecturing the undergraduate students (Second, Third and Fourth year BDS students), teaching pre-clinical techniques and overall clinical supervision.

"I am not where I would want to be, but I believe I am where I am supposed to be now, according to the divine plan and guidance, there is still more that I would like to accomplish, a mountain peak of a mountain is only the bottom of the next. I will do a PhD in the future", Dr. Mokgatlha expressed.

Her journey at SMU started in 2010 when she was working as a sessional Dentist in the Department of Prosthodontics. In 2014, she registered for a Master of Dental Science (MDS), as she desired to specialise in Prosthodontics at a later stage. The earlier years were a challenge to her, especially during her time as a sessional Dentist, a Developmental Dentist and an MDS student.

Dr. Mokgatlha believes that, for any academic department to achieve what is required of it, it is important to have sufficient support for the undergraduates, postgraduates, and the rest of the clinical staff to adequately teach, guide and mentor them in the field. In this way, the dentists in the department will be motivated to develop themselves further in the same field of study. This directly speaks to the importance of some degree of stability that can be brought about by the right amount of human resources especially people who are passionate about this field of study, teaching, and learning, as well as those who have an appreciation of teamwork.

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Success is very personal and relative. I believe everyone has their meaning of success, a meaning that gives them a sense of having accomplished something important based on their values, virtues as well and desires. One then should have the perseverance and resilience to push to accomplish, that which is meaningful to them, and to reach those goals we set for ourselves. We should continuously be willing to learn, to fail (if we do) forward, to take each challenge as a steppingstone and keep moving", Dr. Mokgatlha remarked.



# Dr Maggie Aphane

a driving force behind the Department of Mathematics and Applied Mathematics

**D**r Maggie Aphane is the Head of the Department of Mathematics and Applied Mathematics at Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU) and has been making strides within the institution since 2019. She is a great example of powerful woman who leads with courage, enthusiasm, and compassion.

Dr Aphane recently spearheaded a Mathematical Career fair in collaboration with the Department of Computer Science and Statistical Science at SMU which continues to motivate and inspire students as well as linking them with the organizations that can potentially employ them. She is a member of the South African Mathematical Society (SAMS) and serves in various committees such as senate, school board, Senate Library, school deputy research chair, node leader for centre of excellence in mathematical and statistical sciences, Entrepreneurship development in Higher Education (EDHE) teaching and learning Community of practice, UCDP node leader and National Research Foundation (NRF) reviewer.

She described her journey at SMU as challenging, interesting, motivating, and most importantly inspiring. Part of her goals is to transform the Department of Mathematics and Applied Mathematics' attitude towards the working environment. "It should hurt to leave your office or close your laptop. Everyone should love and enjoy doing their work to the fullest", said Dr Aphane.

Dr Aphane was born and bred in a village called Sekgophong in Zebediela, Limpopo. She matriculated from Madibo Secondary School and then joined the University of South Africa (UNISA) where she obtained a Bachelor of Science, Honours, Masters, and PhD in Mathematics. Her area of specialization is within Topology and was supervised by Prof. Seithuti Moshokoa. She mentioned that pursuing studies at UNISA is not easy since it is an open, distance, and Learning institution. At UNISA "You must become a student and a lecturer at the same time. You should study and teach yourself all the concepts until it is clear," advised Dr Aphane. Her love for Mathematics was inspired by her Mathematics Teacher Martha Nkuna.

Aphane explained that she is not where she wants to be yet. "My journey is still long and I have just started. I aspire to be a rated researcher, a full Professor, and a reviewer in many journals, serve on various scientific committees, extend collaboration with local and international researchers, apply for more funding, and



produce more future mathematicians. I want to emphasize that Mathematics is not a hard subject, but a language used to solve real-life problems and make you think out of the box. Let us not fear to fail but embrace it. If I can do it, then you can do it", concluded Dr Aphane.



# Prof. Mathildah Mokgatlé appointed as a new member of the National Health Research Committee by the Health Minister

**P**rofessor Mathildah Mokgatlé, the Head of Department of Public Health at SMU, in the Faculty of Health Care Sciences, has been appointed as a new member of the National Health Research Committee of (NHRC) by Health Minister Dr Joe Phaahla for the term 2023-2026. The appointment took effect from 01 July 2023.

She is participating in the broad NHRC and serves in two sub-committees which are the Innovation and Research translation, and Monitoring and Evaluation.

She holds a Doctoral degree in Educational Psychology and a Master of Public Health with expertise in the areas of Biostatistics, Social and Behavioural Health Sciences, and Health Systems Management. She possesses over 32 years of professional experience in care services and 23 of those years were spent in academia. “Besides working in academia for most of my career, I always wanted to contribute and apply my public health expertise at all levels of the health care system. Having served in the Ministerial Advisory Committee for Covid-19 from March 2020 to June 2023, I was invited by the National Department of Health through a call for nominations, and I took the opportunity to join and serve in the National Health Research Committee. Since this was a nomination, I received letters of support from two senior academics who are familiar with my work and outputs from the School of Health Care Sciences (SHCS)”, Prof Mokgatlé explained.

The specification required nominees to have expertise and experience in research management, basic research, clinical research, public health and policy research, health system research, social science research or any other health-related research, and community leadership, and her career profile met the requirements.

As a member of the NHRC Prof Mokgatlé will be responsible for identifying research for health priorities and advice the Minister on application and implementation thereof, determine research to be carried out by public health authorities, Co-ordinate the research activities of public health authorities and ensure that health research agendas and research resources focus on key health problems.

Prof. Mokgatlé indicated that being a member of the NHRC is an achievement for her and more importantly for the University as her participation will ensure she makes a contribution towards guiding the National Department of Health in identifying health research priorities concerning the burden of disease; the cost-effectiveness of interventions aimed at reducing the burden of disease; the availability of human and institutional resources for the implementation of an intervention at the level closest to the affected communities; the health needs of vulnerable groups such as women, older persons, children and people with disabilities; and the health needs of communities. Her role will ensure that SMU, through the Research Directorate, will have current information regarding the National Health Research Agenda, priority projects and activities in line with the national plans.

Prof Mokgatlé explained that working and teaching in Public Health is a bit tricky because many important priority health research areas need attention and solutions by individual experts. “The diversity of issues and demand for responsiveness especially with disease outbreaks and epidemics needs one to strike the balance of being a specialist within a defined niche area and providing service and adding to the general public health body of knowledge. It took me time and effort to deliver at a broad public health spectrum and to build a specific portfolio that defines me in the area of social epidemiology, prevention and control of HIV and sexually transmitted infections”, Prof Mokgatlé explained.

She believes that hard work and being open-minded is crucial for everything once people have identified the direction they want to take for their careers. “Allowing collaboration and developing networks for research puts your expertise out in the public and that attracts beneficial relationships and recognition. I opened myself up for volunteering and giving back through serving in academic, provincial and national committees. My name came up as appointable from the nominations since I have been interacting with the National Department of Health through the MAC for Covid-19, the Provincial Covid-19 outbreak team, being a keynote speaker and journal reviewer in the National Health Research Congress and the 2022 Annual Health Report”, Prof Mokgatlé advised.

# Winie Makhura has high ambitions to become a leading academic in the field of chemistry

Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University continues to produce globally competitive graduates and Winie Makhura Junior Lecturer from the School of Science and Technology (SST) is a true reflection of this. Winie joined SMU as a demonstrator in 2015 and later became a tutor in 2018. She is currently a part-time Junior lecturer at the Department of Chemistry and Chemical Technology since 2021.

Winie not only gives lectures to first-level year students in Chemistry but also has massive goals for the department and the SST. According to her observation of first-year to PhD students and part-time Lecturers, there are more male staff than female, and this causes a leaking pipeline within their department. She hopes to hold workshops in community centres to accommodate everyone, inform them about careers in chemistry and demonstrate the importance of chemistry in our lives.

Winie emphasized that in teaching and learning, there is a shortage of staff. She emphasized that if it were up to her, she could recruit staff members preferably Senior Lectures so that the staff can focus on research that will bring money to the department and encourage it to collaborate with local, national and international universities so that they can generate more funds for the department and university. "Every year five or more articles or journals are published, and this can also help scientists to develop new hypothesis which provides training of operating instrumentation techniques for postgraduate students by recruiting with companies, to help develop these students' skills and have references for their future workplace or research studies" informed Winie.

Winie primarily focuses on the development of chemistry, but also gives lectures to Dietetics students and is also part of their community engagement committee. "I have not reached my destiny. I want to see myself as one of the research scientists associated with research innovation corporations or chambers in the world, to provide scientific knowledge that allows new technologies to solve practical problems to the global community that might be caused by various diseases since many cultures still rely on indigenous medicinal plant for their primary health care and the substances have proven to have diversified health benefits for many years. I want to promote gender equality in science and technology because is it not yet fulfilled," said Winie.

Winie was born and raised in Winterveld, Northwest. She matriculated from Ngaka Maseko High School, obtained her Bachelor of Science in Life Sciences and Honours Degree in Chemistry from SMU, and continues to study for her master's degree in chemistry with SMU. She defines Chemistry as the central sciences which provide knowledge of the nature of substances including chemicals and their behaviour, along with the awareness of variation of physical and biological phenomena. "Always stay positive and realistic about the challenge. Start with a desire to succeed in life with intelligence and transparency, the world can conquer you. Always be ready, the potential is within your hard work never give up," encourages Winie.



# SMU bids farewell

## to Prof Sebi Lekalakala-Mokgele and welcomes Dr Rirhandzu Mhinga



Members of the SMU management and other staff members gathered at the VC's Chambers recently to bid farewell to Prof Sebi Lekalakala-Mokgele, the erstwhile Dean of the School of Health Care Sciences as she takes up a new position of Deputy Vice-Chancellor at the University of Venda. The occasion was also used to welcome the newly appointed Director: Information and Library Services Dr Rirhandzu Mhinga.

Vice Chancellor Prof Peter Mbatlana congratulated and wished Prof Lekalakala-Mokgele well on her new position and said that she has acquired the necessary skills and resilience from the previous positions she held. "I always say on this kind of occasion; it is always difficult when we have to say goodbye to a colleague. SMU is a difficult space and I think collectively we made strides to stabilize this institution, and to make sure that it delivers what it must do as a national asset. We have a responsibility to make sure that SMU functions optimally," Mbatlana said.

Mbatlana further mentioned that Prof Lekalakala-Mokgele has been an important part of the leadership of SMU and indicated that the university will continue to work and collaborate with her, whenever there are issues at SMU that will require the university to reach out to her.

Turning to the Director of Information and Library services Mbatlana said "Dr Mhinga, I know I have met you largely online and have not met face to face. This is the first time we meet and we did say that we shall have this kind of function. We welcome you to the university and wish you well. We are





very fast-paced in this university and it is because there is so much to do. So sometimes you will find yourself playing the roles of 2 to 3 people. But the good part is that it is a very supportive environment. You are welcome to visit any office and have an engagement because we work as a team. We are very happy to have you at SMU and welcome”.



Deputy Vice-Chancellor Prof Tandi Matsha-Erasmus also wished Prof Lekalakala well and said she hoped that she will continue to bring order and new programs as she did at the School of Health Care Sciences. “I want to thank you for your contribution to this school. It has been immense having you here and we are going to miss you a lot,” said Prof Matsha.



Speaking on behalf of the Deans, the School of Science and Technology Dean, Prof Lawrence Obi said it was a bitter-sweet moment. “When you have a colleague with whom you have interacted over the years, you do not want to let go. Prof Lekalakala made some giant strides in the School of Health Care Sciences and it is remarkable that amongst us, we have in our midst someone who has been deemed to be eminently qualified to assume the role of Deputy Vice Chancellor in another university. It speaks volumes about the calibre of leadership we have at this university and I applaud that”.



In response, Prof Lekalakala-Mokgele expressed her gratitude for having been at SMU for 13 years and looked back at some of her achievements in the positions she held. Amongst others, she mentioned that the number of those who hold Doctoral degrees at the School have significantly increased under her leadership as compared to when she arrived. “I had the privilege to spent my 13 years in this esteemed institution. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the executive management for their unwavering support, guidance, and trust. Your vision, profundity, leadership, and commitment to fostering excellence have been a driving force behind our collective achievement. I am grateful for the opportunity to have worked closely with each one of you, particularly witnessing the senior management's first-hand dedication to advancing the institution and its mission”, said an emotional Lekalakala.

Dr Mhinga expressed her gratitude to those she had already encountered and the management for organising a session to welcome her to the university. “I would like to thank everyone. Those who agreed to have meetings with me, all of them have gone very well and I realise that everyone that I have met has emptied themselves to me. They gave me all the information that I required and I could not have asked for a better time to come here. Believe me, I don't think there is any library director in this country who has had such a soft landing as I did and thank you for the warm welcome,” she concluded.

# Congratulations to **Prof. Mbat** as he joins the International Association of University Presidents (IAUP)



**C**ongratulations to the SMU Vice Chancellor, Prof. Peter Mbat for his confirmed membership of the International Association of University Presidents (IAUP). In this regard, he joins a group of peer Presidents and Vice Chancellors who together comprise the world's preeminent organization of university leaders.

The International Association of University Presidents (IAUP) is an association of university chief executives from higher education institutions around the world. Membership is limited to those individuals who serve as Presidents, Rectors or Vice-Chancellors at regionally accredited colleges or universities. The IAUP had its foundational Triennial Conference in 1965 and has continued to strive for excellence in the following areas:

- To increase the exchange of experiences, levels of collaboration and networking between university leaders.
- To provide a well-informed forum for university leaders throughout the world.
- To contribute to a worldwide vision of higher education.
- To strengthen the international mission of institutions throughout the world.
- To make every effort for the voice of educational leaders to be heard.
- To support sustainable development in a context of global competency.
- To promote peace and international understanding through education.
- IAUP is a NGO (Non-Governmental Organization) holding the highest (ECOSOC) consultation rights at the United Nations and formal consultation rights with UNESCO.

The IAUP acknowledges that we are living in unprecedented times, with challenges and opportunities worldwide. In this context, it seeks to provide a platform for higher education leaders to learn from what is working, to note what has not worked, and to effect the necessary improvements, while reinventing, innovating and extending the boundaries of what we know.

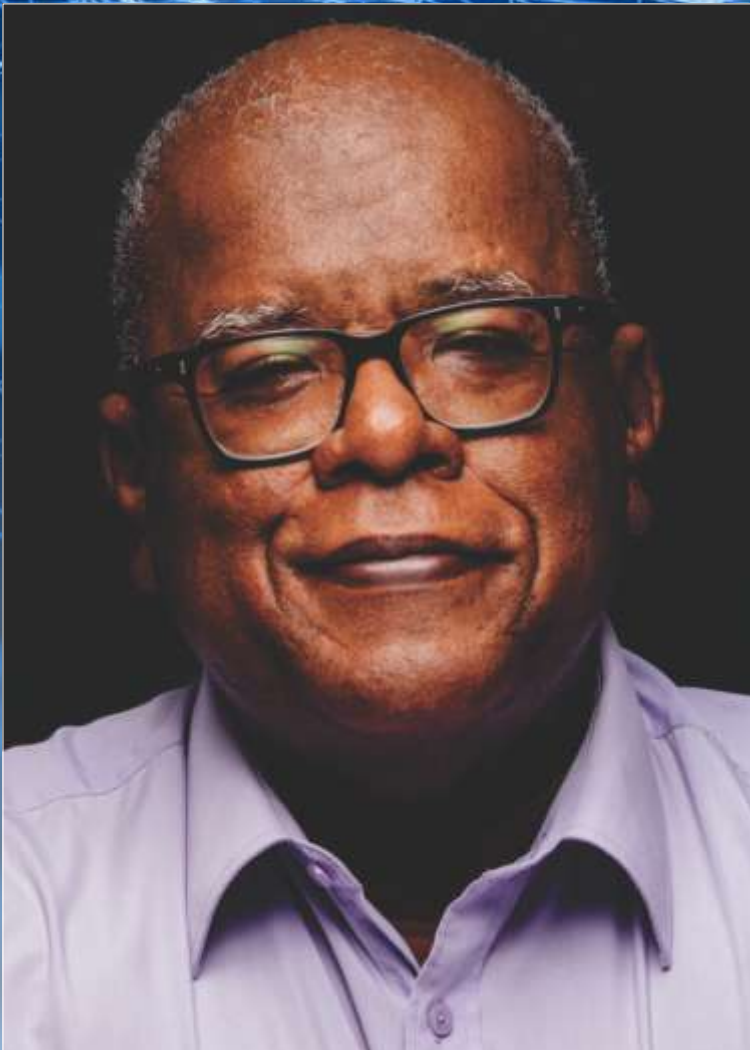
It is envisaged that Prof. Mbat's appointment to the IAUP will have a positive impact not just for SMU but also for our country and the African region in general with regard to quality, relevance and innovation.

The Office of the Vice-Chancellor

*invites you to a*

# **PUBLIC LECTURE:**

**TOPIC:** *“The relationship between Higher Education curriculum and unemployment: Do SA universities prepare graduates for the real world”*



## **SPEAKER:**

### **PROFESSOR JONATHAN JANSEN**

- Currently distinguished Professor of Education at Stellenbosch University and President of the Academy of Science of South Africa.
- Former Rector and Vice-Chancellor of the University of the Free State.

**12 SEPT 2023**

**Time: 15h00**

**Platform: MS Teams**

**Link:** <https://tinyurl.com/4ewkh42m>

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# SMU collaborates with international dietetics educators from Queensland

The Department of Human Nutrition and Dietetics (DHND) at Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU) has recently collaborated with international Dietetics Educators from Queensland, Australia. The Australian Dietetics Educators company is well known as Nutrition Care Professionals (NCPro) Pty Ltd. NCPro uses a case-study approach to provide students, practitioners and clinicians with a means of practising the Nutrition Care Process in life-like circumstances before patient contact. The users analyse the circumstances of the case as described by the patient and then draw on the evidence base to treat the patient's condition. During the process, new dietetic tools and concepts required to treat the patient are introduced and it is demonstrated how these take effect.

Case development was initiated and piloted in 2020 (with the participation of SMU staff members, Ms Estelle Viljoen, a 4th year lecturer and Ms Loraine Sepamla, a clinical training coordinator) during the Covid -19 pandemic when there was limited access by students to patients in the hospitals and clinics. It was an initiative for case management for online teaching and clinical practice.

As part of the case development, the Managing Director of (NCPro) Pty Ltd, Ms Rowan Steward, visited SMU on the 15th and 16th of May 2023. On the 15th of May, Ms Steward had a 3-hour online session with the students from SMU, Ghana and the University of the Free State. In the session, she introduced the virtual NCPro website to the students and revealed the HIV case study that the team had been working on. She took the students through the Nutrition Care Process, step-by-step in a collaborative session.

Subsequently, on the 16th of May, the project coordinator, Mrs Janine Scholtz from SMU and the Managing Director, Ms Steward, visited Dr George Mukhari Academic Hospital (DGMAH) to collaborate with the Dietetics Department to conduct a real-life patient case interview with a patient in the Medical Ward. A patient living with HIV was interviewed and a few short videos of the interview were recorded (informed consent was obtained from the patient). The permission was requested before the interview, and it was granted by the Chief Executive Officer of DGMAH together with the Head of Department of the Dietetics Department of DGMAH. On the 17th of May, the online classroom collaboration continued, and students were taken deeper into the HIV case study on the NCPro website. Students also had the opportunity to complete specific activities related to the HIV case studies and to learn from other students. Mrs Scholtz indicated that the project was a huge success and all the parties involved made a valuable contribution to the case development. "Our 3rd-year students had the opportunity to take part in the activities of the case study and explore the NCPro website, which contributed so much to their understanding of the Nutrition Care Process that we teach them at the 3rd-year level in Dietetics," said Mrs Scholtz.

NCPro Pty Ltd in return for DHND's efforts to host them, gave SMU students access to their online cases for the next 5 years, so that they can learn about various nutritional diseases and work through many other case studies on the their website.



# SMU Lecturer takes the Top Nurse Educator Award



**M**r Kagiso Tukisi, a lecturer in Midwifery and neonatal nursing science at SMU was awarded the Top Nurse Educator award and an Overall change maker within the Midwifery sphere for his PhD studies which focus on advanced midwifery practice regulations to facilitate optimal utilization of their knowledge and skills in public and private health Sectors of South Africa by AFRInurse. The same study was also presented to the International Confederation of Midwives (Global Midwifery stage) on the 12th of June 2023 in Bali, Indonesia.

He was nominated in the Top 50 Nurse heroes who are performing extraordinarily in their chosen specializations in South Africa. AFRInurse is a digital platform that provides nurses in Africa with access to mental health tools supplemented by a booking portal that connects nurses to psychologists and other healthcare professionals online.

According to AFRInurse, over a thousand nominations were received, and the selection criteria was formulated, which included the categorization of nurse heroes based on their contributions. The categories were: Community builder, Covid-19 Warriors, Brave ones, and Change makers, which was categorized into Nurse Advocates, Nurse Researcher and Nurse Educators. The category that Mr Tukisi was nominated for, was Nurse Researcher and Nurse Educator, he met the criteria based on his midwifery neonatal nursing teaching and research.

"It has been an interesting journey given the fact that very few males practice as Midwives. A lot are qualified, but this is because most of the professional nursing studies are either a diploma in nursing science and midwifery or a Bachelor of nursing and midwifery degree. Currently in the South African Nursing Council (SANC) registers, there are only few males who are midwifery specialists, and I can assure you that is the cohort that is passionate about Midwifery and they either practice or are leaders in the Midwifery context. I loved Midwifery as a student, and I have received numerous distinctions in theory and clinical modules", he said.

Education played a major role in Tukisi's life as he grew up a very shy person who could not even speak for himself. When he finally got a chance to work in the hospital, it was a safe space for him because he was able to interact mostly with patients and staff members who got to know him. Furthering his education gave him the opportunity to start interactions and collaborations outside of the hospital environment. He was then introduced to the world of research and academia, and that is how he began to realize that the healthcare professionals are the only people who spend 24 hours around the clock at a patient's bedside and are responsible for both Midwifery and medicine practice.

"A journey to becoming a very good midwife starts with being a very good midwifery student. Be prepared to learn as much as you can in class and clinical practice. I am mentioning both theory and clinical practice because there is a need to integrate the two components. One's ability to integrate the two will enable one to draw a clinical judgement" Mr Tukisi emphasised.

Mr Tukisi is responsible for undergraduate teaching and supervision for postgraduate masters in nursing sciences at SMU. He holds a Diploma in Nursing & Midwifery (Mmabatho College of Nursing: 2010); B Cur (Ed et Admin) (NWU, 2016), MNSC: Midwifery & Neonatal Cum Laude (UJ, 2020). He is currently pursuing his PhD at UJ, his clinical nursing and Midwifery career spans over seven years from Professional nurse General to Advanced Midwifery Specialist within the public & private healthcare sector, with close to 6 years in Nursing education environment at both nursing college and university with specific focus on midwifery and neonatal nursing teaching. He also holds a Marilyn Lahana Award 2017 in the Northwest for his midwifery care service recognized by both colleagues and patients.



# Raising Awareness of Mental Health to diminish stigma and discrimination in our society

**M**ental health is defined as the emotional, psychological, and social well-being of a human being. It includes how one thinks, feels, and acts. It also helps determine how one handles stress, relates to others, and make healthy choices to live a meaningful and fulfilling life. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood and old age. Mental illness on the other hand, significantly impairs overall functioning of an individual socially, occupationally, and academically and these conditions come in various intensities and forms (Depression, Anxiety and Psychosis are the most common conditions). The world faces a mental health pandemic as serious as the one that changed our lives forever in 2020 (COVID-19). According to the 2022 World Mental Health Report, there were 970 million people living with mental disorders globally in 2019, including 14% of the world's adolescents. A new study reveals that South Africans suffer higher rates of probable depression and anxiety than other countries. South Africa ranks low on mental health, according to the report. This is because this country is characterised by living conditions that escalate poor mental health, including social and structural drivers, such as high levels of violence, poverty, unemployment, and inequality. However, only a quarter of those receive treatment. Complex factors are contributors.

Mental health Conditions in SA and our communities are at shocking levels high levels, but people are not seeking help.

Myths and lack of proper information are found to contribute significantly to the stigma surrounding mental health challenges. Dispelling myths about mental health can help break the stigma and create a culture that encourages people of any age to seek support when they need it. Here are some common misconceptions and myths about mental health challenges to reflect on and the list is not exhaustive:

**Myth:** If a person has a mental health condition, it means the person has low intelligence.

**Fact:** Mental illness, like physical illness, can affect anyone regardless of intelligence, social class, gender, or income level.

**Myth:** You only need to take care of your mental health if you have a mental health condition.

**Fact:** Everyone can benefit from taking active steps to promote their well-being and improve their mental health. Similarly, everyone can take active steps and engage in healthy habits to optimize their physical health.

**Myth:** Poor mental health is not a big issue for teenagers. They just have mood swings caused by hormonal fluctuations and act out due to a desire for attention.

**Fact:** Teenagers often have mood swings, but that does not mean that adolescents may not also struggle with their mental health. 14% of the world's adolescents experience mental-health problems. Globally, among those aged 10–15, suicide is the fifth most prevalent cause of death, and for adolescents aged 15–19 it is the fourth most common cause. Half of all mental health conditions start by the age of 14.

**Myth:** Nothing can be done to protect people from developing mental health conditions.

**Fact:** Many factors can protect people from developing mental health conditions, including strengthening social and emotional skills, seeking help and support early on, developing supportive, loving, warm family relationships, and having a positive school environment and healthy sleep patterns. The ability to overcome adversity relies on a combination of protective factors, and neither environmental nor individual stressors alone will necessarily result in mental health problems. Children and adolescents who do well in the face of adversity typically have biological resistance as well as strong, supportive relationships with family, friends, and adults around them, resulting in a combination of protective factors to support well-being.

**Myth:** A mental health condition is a sign of weakness; if the person were stronger, they would not have this condition.

**Fact:** A mental health condition has nothing to do with being weak or lacking willpower. It is not a condition people choose to have or not have. In fact, recognizing the need to accept help for a mental health condition requires great strength and courage. Anyone can develop a mental health condition.

**Myth:** Adolescents who get good grades and have a lot of friends will not have mental health conditions because they have nothing to be depressed about.

**Fact:** Depression is a common mental health condition resulting from a complex interaction of social, psychological, and biological factors. Depression can affect anyone regardless of their socioeconomic status or how good their life appears at face value. Young people doing well in school may feel pressure to succeed, which can cause anxiety, or they may have challenges at home. They may also experience depression or anxiety for no reason that can be easily identified.

**Myth:** Bad parenting causes mental conditions in adolescents.

**Fact:** Many factors – including poverty, unemployment, and exposure to violence, migration, and other adverse circumstances and events – may influence the well-being and mental health of adolescents, their caregivers, and the relationship between them. Adolescents from loving, supporting homes can experience mental health difficulties, as can adolescent from homes where there may be caregivers who need support to maintain an optimum environment for healthy adolescent development. With support, caregivers can play an essential role in helping adolescents to overcome any problems they experience.

## What are the rights of mental health patients in South Africa?

According to the Mental Healthcare Act 17 of 2002, a mental health care user may not be unfairly discriminated against on the grounds of his or her mental health status. Every mental health care user must receive care, treatment, and rehabilitation services according to standards equivalent to those applicable to any other health care user. With the above information as individuals, no one is immune to mental health challenges. In Conclusion, treating each other with compassion and Ubuntu is key to eradicating the stigma and discrimination. Seeking help is the first step to healing.

**Compiled by: Kgadi Thobejane (Department of Clinical Psychology)**

# SMU Oral Health Centre provides extra services as part of the Nelson Mandela International Day



**S**MU Oral Health Centre (SMUOHC) celebrated Nelson Mandela International Day under the theme 'Climate, Food and Solidarity'. As part of the Gauteng Department of Health (GDoH) plan, the centre decided to go beyond 67 minutes and dedicated the whole day towards providing Oral health services to the community as well as SMU staff members.

The Department of Maxillofacial and Oral Surgery did 13 of 25 dental Impaction cases booked for surgery on the day. A Paediatrics surgical marathon took place in collaboration with Kids Dental Home Foundation and Dr George Mukhari Academic Hospital (DGMAH) where 4 of 6 children admitted for surgery had surgery done in the dental theatre. SMU staff members were offered oral hygiene services as part of the good cause. DGMAH assisted with admission wards, cot beds and monitors for SMUOHC theatre and linen. SMU campus health assisted with post-surgery patient transport to DGMAH. As a token of appreciation, the centre served the patients for the day with a light breakfast.

Founder and Director of Kids Dental Home Foundation Dr Londiwe Sibisi-Maboye said that she did restorations normally known as fillings and extractions which include removal of rotten teeth from several children who have been on their waiting list for treatment under general anaesthesia. She also indicated that these children were walking around with pain in their mouths for years and how it is always fulfilling knowing that at least one family's life has been transformed. Now the parents will not worry about the pain their child has been

experiencing. "Children get bullied at school because of their teeth. Remember if they are rotten, the colour changes so they are bullied and their self-esteem gets affected. There are a lot of negative impacts just through rotten teeth and dental pain," stated Dr Sibisi-Maboye.

Dr Sibisi-Maboye further mentioned that the first thing parents need to understand is that baby teeth matter because often parents think, "But why do you have to do all these surgeries? Because these teeth are going to fall out." She advised that parents need to make sure that they check their teeth and their kids as well. To help their children brush and be present for their oral health care needs because they have those teeth to live with until adulthood. "It is vital for parents to understand that baby teeth are important for the function of chewing because, if there are no teeth to chew the food with, then our babies will lose weight. Being undernourished also affects their quality of life because they cannot play as normal, they are so picky with foods and all that so, their quality of life is affected. Another thing, parents need to understand is that dental visits are extremely important and must at least consult twice a year. The dentist at that point can detect some conditions and will be able to intervene then so that it does not come to the stage where the child is taken to theatre for surgery," motivated Dr Sibisi-Maboye.

Dental therapist and SMU Alumni Ms Tshegofatso Mashike shared that her day was a good one, her patient was very calm and sweet. "I enjoyed working on her because she

*continues to page 27...*

needed the cleaning. It is nice to give people good oral health services and advice”, explained Ms Mashike. Mrs Magda Fouche from the Dean's office: Oral Health Sciences said “I came here for the Mandela Day due to the cleaning of the mouth that the School of Oral Health Sciences is promoting. How can I say I am not satisfied? She did a very good job. I did not feel pain and she explained to me where I still need to work on my teeth. I am glad that I landed with Ms Mashike today.

Dr Dakalo Nelwamondo mentioned that he was helping patients who were complaining about painful wisdom teeth. He was extracting and doing surgery to remove those painful wisdom teeth. “We give patients a consent form to sign so that they can give us the go-ahead to remove those wisdom teeth. There are some risks associated with removing wisdom teeth like fracture of the jaw, injuring of the inferior villa nerve, injuring of lingual nerve, and so forth”, explained Dr Nelwamondo. He also pointed out that this is why the consent form is essential. He recommended dental consultations bi-annually so that oral health workers can screen and diagnose conditions early so as to ensure a good prognosis.

Dental therapist Mr Malusi Ignatius Makoa explained that for Mandela Day, he was attending to patients with different needs from various spheres of life but mainly dealt with SMU colleagues. He mentioned that he interacted with them in terms of oral treatment where a variety of treatments were offered on this day which included prophylaxis a preventative treatment, scaling, and polishing. “A few of us managed to do restorations, so patients who needed further treatment in terms of specialized dentistry which requires dentures (false teeth), were referred to the relevant department. I feel like Mandela Day should be every day and this can start somewhere by having these kinds of activities once in a month and as time goes on maybe twice,” said Mr Makoa.

He further highlighted brand awareness by saying this initiative is another way of promoting oral health, which is embedded in their scope of practice. “Health promotion must be taken to a higher level and today I saw activities attaining the same objective. We sometimes go by the motto that oral health is a gateway to general health because the mouth is important,” Makoa said. He stated that we use our mouths to eat food and without a mouth, no one is going to survive. He said that it is important that we take care of our mouths and that teeth are also used for speech. “If you do not have teeth, you tend to speak in a way that is not the usual way hence we have to pronounce words in the right way. We use them to chew and they give us these facial shapes we have”, he concluded.



## The Student Affairs Department hosted an engagement session between SMU and Off-Campus Accommodation Service Providers

**T**he Director of Student Affairs, Mr Tulani Nkuntse chaired the engagement between SMU and Off-Campus Accommodation Service Providers on 7 July 2023 addressing critical issues which included contingency plans on water, electricity, and Wi-Fi.

The purpose of this meeting was to facilitate continuous engagements to strengthen the relationship between the service providers and the university. This session commenced to present the institution's standards and arrangements as they relate to Student Discipline, Safety and Security, Contractual Obligations, Gender-Based Violence response, and Action Research on Wi-Fi. “This conversation is important and I want to

*continues to page 28...*



indicate that this is the start of many more conversations. It is not correct for us to always meet under pressurizing times when there is a crisis. When things are also fine, we need to engage and this is a process that we are committing to," said Nkuntse.

Acting Head of Department: Student Housing Mr Mohale Machete indicated that Student Housing pride itself in making campus a home away from home. "We support students outside their classroom through residence life activities, to produce grounded graduates that are locally relevant and globally competitive," he said. Several presentations were made focusing on amongst others, the following areas: Safety and Security, Student Disciplinary Processes, Customer Service, facilities and infrastructure management, Student Life.

Mr Oubry Thekoane said that their Department engaged in research that uncovered many inconsistencies in Wi-Fi services in the university residence spaces. This prompted them to act and see how they can intervene in terms of standardizing it and ensuring that SMU students get quality Wi-Fi services. A survey was conducted. "The aim of the research was to examine the perception of our students on the quality of Wi-Fi service off-campus residences and investigate the various aspects involved in enhancing and maintaining a 19 Wi-Fi network. Based on the feedback received, we explored key factors such as network infrastructure, Coverage, and management strategies", he mentioned.





# Prof Obi

urges students  
in the School of Science  
and Technology to exercise  
perseverance at its recently  
held Colloquium



**T**he School of Science and Technology held a Colloquium recently with the purpose to inspire individuals who are committed to personal and professional development.

The Dean of the SST Prof. Larry Obi, gave words of encouragement and urged the students to persevere through any challenges they may face during their academic journey. He further emphasized the importance of resilience and hard work in achieving academic success.

Several speakers addressed the Colloquium including Prof Obi, Dr Thami Nyundu, Ms. Gugulethu Nonhlahla Dhlamini, and Mr. Vhugala Mabirimisa who shared their valuable insights on the importance of continuous personal development, discipline, seeking help when needed, and staying motivated.

Speaking about the importance of discipline, Mr Vhugala Mabirimisa, shared how he personally managed his time to ensure that he was on top of his academic work while taking part in extracurricular activities. He further urged the students to be mindful of their time and to use it wisely to achieve their goals.

"The Colloquium provided a platform to connect with individuals who are committed to their personal and professional development", Mr Buti Makama from the Innovation Hub stated.

Dr Thami provided valuable insights into the realities of the job market and the foundation of one's field of study. He also reminded students of the significance of being proactive in their academic work, seeking out opportunities to learn, and taking advantage of every chance to develop their skills.

Ms Gugulethu Dhlamini also shared the story of her journey as a Bachelor of Science student, she emphasized the need for continuous personal development, highlighting that academic success is not only about what students learn in the classroom but also about the skills they develop beyond the classroom.



# SMU establishes a plant nursery to improve campus grounds

The SMU Gardens and Grounds team has established a plant nursery on campus as part of its initiative to improve the campus grounds and contribute towards sustainable planting. The nursery will support the growing needs of the university for plants and flower beds to enhance the campus grounds.

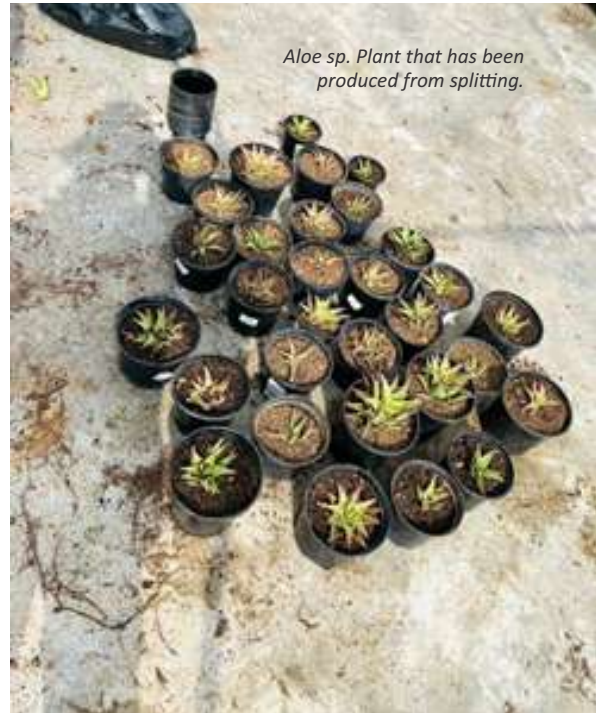
In the long term, the nursery will be expanded to serve the local community needs to support environmental conservation in our local community. This will be commercialized to generate additional revenue for the university to contribute towards the university's financial sustainability objectives.

The SMU nursery cover 50m<sup>2</sup> and was constructed using 40% shade net and Steel poles. The university has used low-cost durable material to construct the green houses that will allow plant propagation success as part of the university's sustainability goals to utilise environmentally friendly material. Considering that the University is in a water scarce environment, the green houses offer a good opportunity for the University to be able to grow desirable plants under a controlled environment that will be introduced.

Plants will be produced using seed and plant parts which will be propagated and multiplied, this will include the initial plant stock that will be bought and collected from the wild. The SMU Gardens and Grounds Services team has been granted a plant collecting permit which allows the University to lower the cost of buying plants by multiplication of naturally collected plants from the wild and this will enable SMU to contribute to the conservation of plants.

Article Produced by: Bathabile Ndlovu  
Date :13/08/2023

40% shade green house structure



Aloe sp. Plant that has been produced from splitting.



Plant splitting activity done in the greenhouse structure for plant multiplication for Rockery project.

# SMU Department of Radiography visited Thulaganyo Secondary School to Enlighten the Learners

**S**efako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU), Department of Radiography visited Thulaganyo Secondary School on Wednesday 22nd of August 2023 as part of the community engagement. Thulaganyo Secondary School is situated in the rural area of Winterveld in Pretoria (Gauteng Province). The school is in an underprivileged community that is dominated by unemployed parents (relying on grants), of which majority of them are addicts and many have passed away. As a result, there is a lack of parental support to monitor and motivate learning to the learners. Most families are child-headed with extreme socio-economic challenges and this makes poverty to be extremely high.

The main purpose of the visit was to address topics such as; Teachers as parents away from home, societal issues, and career guidance. The department has been supporting the school on several initiatives apart from the visit. The visit was executed by 18 Bachelor in Radiology (Brad) 3rd year students

and 4 lecturers. Over 1126 learners (grades 7, 8 and 9 collectively) were gathered outside of their classrooms in attendance to the presentations.

SMU students presented under their group focus topics; Teachers as parents away from home (Respect for teachers, cultivating good habits, asking for help, Responsibility, Respect amongst learners), Societal Issues (Peer pressure, Stress and Bullying, Health and Hygiene, nurturing young skills and talent(s), Using talent as an outlet for overwhelming stress) Career Guidance (Transitioning to the next grade, Career choices, Study tips, Promoting Radiography).

“We had learners from grades seven, eight and nine. The students were giving the learners proper information about career paths when coming to medical studies. The presentations were very informative and very productive because our learners were interacting. It shows that our



*continues to page 32...*

learners needed this type of motivation to see that or rather to plan for their future. SMU should continue doing such events, especially for rural or rather schools that are in rural places so that our learners know exactly what they need to do or what they must do when they finish their matric studies. This is very productive for our kids as they need to know exactly what is it that they should do to achieve what they want to in the medical field" " says Brenda Mahlalela, the English and Economics and Management Sciences teacher.

Bachelor of radiography third-year student and class representative, Kagiso Mnisi indicated that SMU Radiography students visited the school, to encourage learners and advise them about career choices. This includes how learners can choose careers for themselves since most of them choose careers based on peer pressure. He gave an example by saying that some learners would want to do a Bachelor of Science degree not because they want to, but because a friend influenced them to. He said: "It might be hard to progress to the next level and complete your studies if your choice was based on your friend's influence rather than your strengths and weaknesses. I can tell that being a teacher is not easy, especially from Secondary school, because Some learners do not listen but if you come up with something that grabs their attention, they will concentrate", Kagiso expressed.





## The Departments of Mathematics and Applied Mathematics, Computer Science and information technology and Statistical Sciences held a Career Fair to link students with various organizations

**S**MU Department of Mathematics and Applied Mathematics, Computer Science, and Statistical Science hosted a mathematical career fair on 17 August 2023. The purpose of this career fair was to enlighten students and learners from visiting schools about the vast opportunities that are out there through engagement with various companies that were invited for the day.

Schools that attended this event included PHL Moraka Secondary School and Tipfuxeni Secondary School. The companies that were present are ABSA, South African Mathematical Foundation, Standard Bank, Tech South Africa, The Professional Provident Society, Old Mutual, and South African Civil Aviation Authority. SMU students together with the learners from the above schools went to the companies' stalls to grasp knowledge regarding their operations and how they could benefit from them financially, and professionally. For the fun part of it, a competition was played between the learners, undergraduates, and post-graduates from the School of Science and Technology where they had to solve mathematical problems. The winners of the competition were the undergraduate team.

Dr Aphane, Head of the Department of Mathematics and Applied Mathematics said, "Mathematics is the language which God used to give the universe. Millions saw an apple fall but it was a mathematician, Newton who asked why and this gave birth to the Newton's law. Those who say mathematics is difficult, do not know how challenging life is. The simplest subject in the world is mathematics". She explained that it is clear that the main aim of mathematics is to make the students think out of the box. She stated that the three departments put their hands together and said, whatever company that appoints the BSc mathematical graduates will be invited.

Prof Larry Obi Dean of the School of Science and Technology explained that the mathematical career fair is something that is now implanted in the university. "The University ensured that it attracts many students and of course, is beginning to see the fruits of this career fair. It is an opportunity for students in this particular discipline to be exposed to other areas of human endeavour. I am sure that the mathematics department is a very strong one, blazing the trail for other departments. Despite this career fair, the mathematics department is leading in terms of research publications in the whole university", said Prof Obi. He further stated that the School of Science and Technology prides itself in having numerous publications and a substantial part of those publications comes from the Department of Mathematics and Applied Mathematics. "The department is in partnership with the Centre of Excellence in mathematics and statistical sciences, which caters excellence in mathematics and statistics to various universities. Recently there have been moves to make sure that there are collaborations amongst historically disadvantaged universities in the training of students in mathematics and applied mathematics", Obi said.

Bongisizwe Sibeko SRC Chairperson for the School of Science and Technology shared that he applied for a Bachelor of Science (BSc) and it has been a very good course even though it can be difficult sometimes. He also said that It is very important to know who you are when doing this course as it requires the highest level of discipline. "You should value your time and the course that you are doing. There is no time to rest if you want to be successful and it is very important to understand what you want to do with your life", he said.





# Foundation for professional development visit SMU School of Medicine for strategic partnerships

**S**efako Makgatho Health Sciences University's (SMU) School of Medicine, invited the Foundation for Professional Development (FPD) to seek guidance, forge strategic partnerships and collaboration on the development of a comprehensive curriculum for SMU management, and professional skills development to the SMU community. The intention to develop Short Learning Programmes (SLPs) forms part of the University's Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and third stream income generation projects for departments under the School of Medicine.

This visit also sought to formulate a memorandum of understanding and assist the School of Medicine and the University in expanding its education and e-learning offerings.

The FPD representatives were taken on a tour led by Gift Lebethe and explored the Anatomy Department whilst an illustration of technology used for practicums in the department was led by the Head of the Anatomy Department Prof Robert Ndou. They also visited SMU's Skills Centre and the Director of the centre, Dr Lesego Phiri took them through what the skills centre offers and its significance in training SMU students. The visitors were shown manikins that are used for practically training students including a demonstration of a manikin that is controlled by a lecturer using a computer that allows for them to have a pulse, blink, show blood pressure and heartbeat.

The Dean of the School of Medicine Prof Nathaniel Mofolo indicated that in the next visit of the FPD, another tour will be

hosted to go and view the Centre for Entrepreneurship Rapid Incubator CfERI that envisions being a leading centre and platform for health sciences students and associated communities to embrace outstanding entrepreneurs' innovative initiatives.

The partnership between the School of Medicine and FPD will assist in creating the development of a unique market-focused approach to bring more service providers SMU. "The Meeting was part of a feasible plan to introduce the SLPs and CPD. Some of the earmarked projects of collaboration would involve international reciprocal exchange programs for student global exposure among others in the future" stated Lebethe.



# School of Oral Health Sciences celebrates the 2023 Inaugural Research Day

The School of Oral Health Sciences at SMU hosted its inaugural Research Day on 18 August 2023, celebrating it under the theme 'Roots in Research, Building fertile ground for Research collaboration in Oral Health'. The successful event was organised by the local organising committee under the leadership of Dr Hilde Miniggio, the Chairperson of the School's Research and Innovation Committee and focused on a variety of topics in Oral health.

In her welcoming address, SOHS Acting Dean Prof Dini Mawela said "Our goal is for you to not only be inspired and encouraged by our keynote speakers but to also engage in stimulating discussions and exchange innovative research thoughts and ideas". She encouraged the audience to foster lasting networks with each other and collaborations beyond the domain of Oral Health. Prof Razia Khammissa from the University of Pretoria, Prof Carina Eksteen, and Dr K Syebele both from Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU) served as the judging panel for the presentations.

Prof Mapaseka Seheri: Director of Research and Innovation presented key strategies from the institution's Research and Innovation strategy for 2021 – 2025, followed by a keynote address from Prof Larry Obi: Dean for the School of Science and Technology who presented on "The Journey towards National Research Foundation (NRF) rating", a talk which

served to set the scene for the day and to encourage academics in the school to pursue collaborative research in future.

There were guest presentations by Dr Julia Ambler, an expert in Paediatric palliative care and the current Chairperson of the Association of Palliative Care Practitioners of South Africa (PALPRAC). Dr Ambler presented about "Wellness in academia" and shared practical tips on how to recognise burnout, and how to manage the effects of burnout. Dr Jillian Gardner, a Senior Lecturer at the WITS Steve Biko Centre for Bioethics, was the last speaker for the day and she provided a lot of thoughts about research integrity in her talk on Research Ethics.

Attendees joined the celebration in great numbers both in person and virtually. There was a total of 21 presentations for the day which consisted of Oral 12, Posters 6, and Research Concepts 3. There was an opportunity for the presenters to answer questions from the judges and the audience. Presenters who presented their research concepts were given guidance and feedback on how to develop their proposals further. Poster presentations were done during the tea and lunch breaks. There was a special presentation by Dr Uriana Boje from the Medical Protection Society Foundation in the United Kingdom who shared the great news that



the Foundation will be launching a programme of Research Competitions for final-year students in Dentistry in South Africa in 2024.

Dr Van Wyk, a postgraduate student from the Department of Maxillo-Facial and Oral Surgery won the prize for the best Oral Presentation and received a year's subscription for a training development programme by ITI sponsored by Straumann and a book voucher from Van Schaick. Other prize winners were Dr Opperman for an Outstanding Oral presentation (Second Place), Dr Bhana for an Outstanding Poster presentation (First Place), and Ms Takalani - for an Outstanding Poster presentation (Second Place). Mr Henecke Silotolo a Bachelor of Dental Surgery student won the prize for the best undergraduate poster presentation and received book vouchers from Van Schaick. The inaugural Research Day of the SOHS proved to be a success, achieving its objectives of building fertile ground for research collaboration in Oral Health. Prof Mundzhelele, Head of the Department for Maxillo-Facial and Oral Surgery closed the event and thanked all those who took part.



# Let us make breastfeeding work at work!



## Objectives of #WBW2023



### Inform

people about working parents' perspectives on breastfeeding and parenting



### Anchor

optimal paid leave and workplace support as important tools to enable breastfeeding



### Engage

with individuals and organisations to enhance collaboration and support for breastfeeding at work



### Galvanise

action on improving working conditions and relevant support for breastfeeding



**B**reastfeeding is a crucial aspect of infant health, thus it's critical to assist working parents in continuing their breastfeeding journey. The 2023 World Breastfeeding Week theme, "Enabling Breastfeeding: Making a Difference for Working Parents" (WABA, 2023) highlights the need for workplace policies that support breastfeeding mothers. This article examines the significance of breastfeeding in the workplace.

### The Importance of Breastfeeding for Working Parents:

Breastfeeding provides numerous health benefits for both infants and mothers. It strengthens the immune system, reduces the risk of chronic diseases, and promotes bonding between the mother and child [2]. BScDIET II students completed a 20-hour lactation management course during 26-28 July where they were equipped to apply all aspects of the Mother Baby Friendly Initiative (MBFI) in the South African health sector. They experienced theoretical teachings and it all culminated in observing and applying their knowledge when visiting the labour wards, antenatal clinic as well as the Kangaroo Mother Care (KMC) ward at Dr George Mukhari Academic Hospital (DGMAH). The students also observed the real challenge of working mothers having to face challenges in balancing their responsibilities of earning an income with breastfeeding.

### Enabling Breastfeeding in the Workplace:

It's critical to foster a welcoming atmosphere for breastfeeding parents at work. Employers can create guidelines to support breastfeeding, such as flexible work schedules, designated lactation rooms, and breastfeeding breaks (Pereira-Kotze, 2022). These policies allow breastfeeding mothers who are employed to continue doing so while continuing their employment.

The North West University recently launched a comprehensive breastfeeding policy to support working parents. It specifies that arrangements should be made for employees who are breastfeeding to have two 30-minute breaks a day to breastfeed or express milk for the first six months after returning to work. It emphasizes the provision of comfortable lactation spaces, flexible work arrangements, and breastfeeding breaks. A breastfeeding room, called Made for Moms, is a safe and private space where NWU employees can go and express milk during working hours. The compact yet comfortable room is equipped with chairs, a wash basin and a designated parking bay. It is big enough to accommodate three women at a time. The policy also encourages breastfeeding education and awareness programs. The implementation of the North West University breastfeeding policy offers several advantages. It promotes a family-friendly work environment, enhances employee satisfaction, and reduces absenteeism due to infant illness (North West University Workplace Breastfeeding Policy, 2021). By supporting breastfeeding parents, the policy contributes to the physical and emotional well-being of both employees and their children.

### Conclusion:

Breastfeeding in the workplace is a critical aspect of supporting working parents. World Breastfeeding Week will educate the public about the perspectives of working parents on breastfeeding and parenting. It emphasises the establishment of paid leave and workplace support as crucial factors in enabling breastfeeding, interacts with the private sector, government and organizations to foster collaboration and support for breastfeeding at work, and inspires action to improve working conditions and relevant support for breastfeeding.

*Compiled by:* Mrs C MacDougall, Lecturer:  
Department of Human Nutrition & Dietetics.

# Viral Hepatitis: Fact Sheet

**Overview:** Viral hepatitis refers to a group of infectious diseases caused by different viruses, primarily affecting the liver. The most common types are Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, Hepatitis D, and Hepatitis E.

## Types of Viral Hepatitis

- Hepatitis A (HAV): Transmitted through the consumption of contaminated food or water and, in some cases, through direct contact with an infected person's faeces. It is usually acute and does not lead to chronic infection.
- Hepatitis B (HBV): Mainly transmitted through infected blood, sexual contact, or from mother to child during childbirth. It can be either acute or chronic, with the latter leading to long-term liver complications.
- Hepatitis C (HCV): Primarily transmitted through direct contact with infected blood, often associated with sharing needles among intravenous drug users or receiving contaminated medical equipment. HCV can cause chronic infection and liver damage over time.
- Hepatitis D (HDV): A rare type of hepatitis that occurs only in individuals already infected with HBV. HDV can worsen the outcome of HBV infection.
- Hepatitis E (HEV): Transmitted through contaminated water, and similar to HAV, it is usually acute and in some cases leads to chronic infection (immunosuppressed patients). However, in pregnant women, HEV can lead to severe complications.

## Global Burden

- Viral hepatitis is a significant global health issue, caused by hepatitis viruses (mainly hepatitis B and C viruses), which lead to inflammation of the liver [1]. It has a substantial impact on healthcare systems worldwide. The prevalence of viral hepatitis is staggering, with millions of people infected with hepatitis B and C viruses (296 million and 71 million, respectively). These infections can cause chronic liver diseases, such as cirrhosis and liver cancer, and are responsible for a considerable number of deaths each year. In 2016, viral hepatitis was responsible for 1.4 million deaths, making it a major cause of mortality globally [2].

Among the different types of viral hepatitis, hepatitis B virus (HBV) and hepatitis C virus (HCV) are particularly concerning. They account for the vast majority of viral hepatitis-related deaths, making up 96% of all fatalities attributed to the disease [3].

The situation is further complicated for individuals living with HIV. Co-infections of HIV with hepatitis B or C are prevalent, leading to an increased burden of disease. The estimated number of people globally who are co-infected with HIV and hepatitis C is 2.75 million, while those co-infected with HIV and hepatitis B are approximately 2.6 million [4].



Given the severity of the problem, global health authorities recognize the importance of addressing viral hepatitis as a public health priority. The World Health Organization (WHO) has included viral hepatitis prevention as one of the targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development [5]. This initiative emphasizes the urgent need for effective prevention and control measures to combat viral hepatitis.

### Symptoms

Symptoms of viral hepatitis can vary, but common signs include:

- Fatigue and weakness.
- Jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes).
- Abdominal pain or discomfort.
- Loss of appetite.
- Nausea and vomiting.
- Dark urine and pale-coloured stool.

### Prevention

Prevention is crucial in controlling viral hepatitis transmission. Preventive measures include:

- **Vaccination:** Vaccines are available for Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B and are recommended for high-risk groups.
- **Safe Hygiene Practices:** Proper handwashing and hygiene can help prevent the spread of Hepatitis A and E through contaminated food or water.
- **Safe Sex:** Practicing safe sex and using barrier methods can reduce the risk of Hepatitis B and other sexually transmitted infections.
- **Needle Exchange Programs:** Providing access to sterile needles and syringes helps prevent the transmission of Hepatitis C and other blood-borne infections among intravenous drug users.

### Treatment

- **Hepatitis A:** There is no specific treatment for acute HAV infection, but supportive care can help manage symptoms.
- **Hepatitis B and C:** Antiviral medications are available for the treatment of chronic HBV and HCV infections. Early diagnosis and appropriate medical care can help manage the disease and prevent complications.

### Screening and Testing

Regular testing and screening are essential, especially for high-risk individuals, to identify infections early and prevent

further transmission. Blood tests can diagnose viral hepatitis and determine the type of infection.

### Awareness and Education:

Raising awareness about viral hepatitis, its modes of transmission, and preventive measures is essential for reducing its impact. Education campaigns can help dispel myths and encourage testing and vaccination in at-risk populations.

Remember, the information provided here is a general fact sheet and might not cover all specific details or recent updates. Always refer to reliable sources such as the WHO, the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), or your local health department for the latest and most accurate information on viral hepatitis.

1. Viral hepatitis: Indian scenario. Satsangi S, Chawla YK. *Med J Armed Forces India*. 2016;72:204–210. [[PMC free article](#)] [[PubMed](#)] [[Google Scholar](#)]
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3. Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluation. The University of Washington. GBD compare. [ May; 2021 ]; <http://www.healthdata.org/data-visualization/gbd-compare-2020>
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#### Written by:

Omphile E Simani (PhD) | Keitumetsi Moeng (MBChB) | Maemu Gededzha (PhD)  
Department of Virology Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University

# Institutional

# Values

Aligned to Strategic Plan 2021-2025

## An activation was held on 24 August 2023

to raise awareness and promote SMU Values at the entrance of the University. The institutional values have been developed and communicated to the University community over the past few months. It remains crucial that these values are embedded and lived through everything that the University does. The activation was a critical part of some of the steps the university is taking to ensure that these values are embodied into the culture of the university.

