

THE PULSE



Medical School NEWSLETTER



IN THIS ISSUE

THE PULSE | Nelson Mandela University Medical School Newsletter

Volume: 1 | July 2024

1. FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK: Dr Reno Morar, School of Medicine

2. MEET AND GREET: Our HODs

- Dr Zithulele Tshabalala
- Dr Sean Volkwyn
- New appointments: Professor Siyazi Mda and Professor Mfundiso Mabenge

3. THE MANDELA DOCTOR

4. IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Staff

- The joy of teaching future doctors: Dr Yoshna Kooverjee, Senior Lecturer and Module Coordinator: Theory and Practice of Medicine
- Primary Health Care Education: a cornerstone of the modern health care model

Students

- Jordan Lindoor (1st year class representative)
- Kavir Dullabh (3rd year class representative)

5. SCHOOL NEWS: Events and Initiatives

- Diarrhoea and Antibiotics: an integrated lecture
- 1st Year White Coat Oath Taking Ceremony
- We support #CrazySocks4Docs!

6. FUNDING

- Transforming Lives: the impact of bursaries on student success
- Addressing the financial plight of medical students



“Being a medical doctor is more than a profession; it is a calling that requires us to be compassionate, committed, competent, caring, community-oriented and humble.”

1. FROM THE DIRECTOR’S DESK

I am delighted to welcome you to the first edition of our Nelson Mandela University Medical School newsletter.

Based at Missionvale Campus in Gqeberha, we fall under the Faculty of Health Sciences and for South Africa, we are the nation’s tenth medical school. Our school opened its doors to the first cohort of student doctors in March 2021, and we found our wings during COVID-19 – one of humanity’s most trying times in recent history. The Medical School aims to produce fit-for-purpose professionals who learn and grow within the communities that they will serve once qualified. Our school is a catalyst for change, contributing to urban renewal and the regeneration of the surrounding community, as well as the wider city.

The School stands as a beacon of excellence, dedication and innovation in the field of healthcare education. Each day, I am inspired by the passion and commitment of our students, the expertise in our faculty, and the unwavering support of our staff. Together, we create an environment that nurtures learning, fosters research, and ultimately, cultivates the next generation of compassionate and skilled healthcare professionals.

Our staff and students are excited to be part of this lifelong journey of learning, discovery, innovation and community engagement. We endeavour to work with colleagues from diverse disciplines and professions towards our collective goal of delivering equitable, people-centred, high-quality healthcare in partnership with communities. Being a medical doctor is more than a profession; it is a calling that requires

us to be compassionate, committed, competent, caring, community-oriented and humble.

The curriculum is intentionally structured to be community-oriented, poised to engage with the community, facilitating transformative learning while striving to meet the needs of the communities we serve.

In this edition, you will find stories that highlight our achievements and activities. From student-led initiatives that are making an impact, to updates on our continuous efforts to enhance our curriculum, there is much to celebrate and reflect upon. As we move forward, let us remain committed to our core values of excellence, integrity, and service. Let us continue to support each other, inspire each other, and work collaboratively towards our shared goals. I encourage you all to actively engage with the contents of this newsletter and to contribute your own stories and achievements for future editions.

Thank you for being an integral part of the Nelson Mandela University Medical School family. Together, we will continue to uphold the legacy of Nelson Mandela through our dedication to education, innovation and service to humanity.

Warm regards,

Dr Reno Morar
Director, Medical School
Nelson Mandela University

COLLABORATION IS KEY:

Dr Zithulele Tshabalala

Mandela University's first anatomist and a *Mail & Guardian* 200 Young South Africans in 2023 recipient, Dr Tshabalala is breaking new ground in interdisciplinary medicine as senior lecturer in Human Anatomy and HOD of the Department of Human Biology and Integrated Pathology.

The department comprises 13 colleagues from six disciplines - Anatomical Pathology, Human Anatomy, Human Physiology, Medical Biochemistry, Microbiology and Pharmacology - who all teach across the first three years of the MBChB programme.

"The diversity of the department serves the purpose of the Medical School, which is to create generalist, primary healthcare centred doctors," says Dr Tshabalala, who holds a PhD and MSc in Anatomy (cum laude), BSc (Hons) in Macro-anatomy and BSc Medical Science from the University of Pretoria. He also is the recipient of the JM Boon prize for Best Achievement in Anatomy research at master's and doctoral level.

"The make-up of the department presents a unique opportunity for collaboration between disciplines that were traditionally isolated, and which now co-exist. This allows us to train the students to be true generalists by exposing them to all aspects of patient care simultaneously."



Dr Zithulele Tshabalala, Senior lecturer in Human Anatomy and HOD of the Department of Human Biology and Integrated Pathology.

Besides the achievement of successfully completing three years of the curriculum in 2023 colleagues have also received numerous accolades: Dr Savania Nagiah, an NRF Y-rated researcher, member of the South African Young Academy of Science (SAYAS) and currently in the Future Professors Programme (FPP); Mahlatse Mahasha (MSc in Medicine – Medical Cell Biology); Dr Simo Zulu (NRF Thuthuka Grant 2024); Dr Ntokozo Mzimela named Global Health Icon 2023, (Zenith Global Health Awards) and Joastin Naidoo and Philanathi Mabena, who both completed the Early Career Academics Advancement Programme.

PUTTING PATIENTS FIRST:

Dr Sean Volkwyn

Department of Medical Practice HOD Sean Volkwyn is a born and bred Mandela Bay boy. The senior lecturer and clinical co-ordinator has lived in Gqeberha most of his life and has a special interest in primary healthcare.

After completing undergraduate studies (MBBCh) at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg in 1995, he continued with postgraduate studies at the University of Stellenbosch (MMed – Family Medicine) until 2010, graduating as a Family Medicine Specialist before going into private practice.

He worked in Family Medical Practice for 23 years and also spent stints abroad, working in Canada and Ireland. Married to Janine, with whom he has two beautiful daughters (and two equally lovable Labsky dogs), he loves reading, travelling, the outdoors and hiking.



Dr Sean Volkwyn, Clinical Coordinator and HOD of the Department of Medical Practice

"I'm so happy to be part of the training of medical students, and to develop the type of doctor that Nelson Mandela University wishes to pursue."

New Appointments

On behalf of Dr Reno Morar, staff and students, a very warm welcome to our first Academic Clinical Heads of Department, as of 1 July, 2024.

Professor Mfundiso Mabenge: Obstetrics and Gynaecology

Professor Siyazi Mda: Paediatrics and Child Health

**WE ARE HONOURED TO HAVE YOU AS
PART OF OUR MEDICAL SCHOOL FAMILY.**

3. THE MANDELA DOCTOR

The launch of South Africa's tenth medical school was underpinned by a cherished goal: to produce the country's first Mandela Doctors.

The iconic Mandela name has long been a beacon of hope not only here, but across the world. Through our Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery degree, the Medical School aims to train caring, competent and committed medical doctors who serve their communities, much as Madiba did throughout his life.

How does one produce a Mandela Doctor? Our training focuses on fostering an interprofessional team environment that practises primary healthcare holistically, comprehensively and with cultural sensitivity.

The curriculum is intentionally structured to be community-oriented; the Medical School actively engages with its community, facilitating transformative learning, while simultaneously striving to fully meet the needs of the communities which they serve.

The goal of the MBChB Programme is to co-create a competent generalist – one who is primary healthcare-focused and fit-for-purpose, in line with HPCSA graduate competencies. These graduates will leave our School fully qualified to serve as Mandela Doctors.

The Programme's comprehensive primary healthcare approach focuses on the four pillars of medicine: disease prevention, health promotion, treatment, and rehabilitative medicine. We emphasise a strong, well-grounded approach to learning and teaching as a core strategic focus area, supported by high-tech equipment, resources and facilities which provide authentic, real-life training experiences.

The approach is contextually responsive, aiming to 'future-proof' doctors-in-training by providing more than just medical skills; they will be schooled in the knowledge, values, attitudes, ethics, and competencies needed to succeed and flourish in an ever-changing and challenging work environment.

Training spans over a period of 6 years. Years 1-3 are facilitated at Missionvale Campus and years 4-6 are facilitated at various healthcare facilities on the clinical platform in partnership with the Eastern Cape Department of Health.

Our aim is to develop and produce socially conscious medical doctors who can compete globally, but who also have a deep passion to change the lives of poor communities. This is the legacy of Nelson Mandela, and through our Medical School, we will continue to honour our namesake for years to come.



THE MANDELA DOCTOR

FHS vision: To co-create critical thinking health science graduates with transformative action who change the world by being in service of society

Primary healthcare orientated and fit for purpose



Solid foundation of basic sciences

4. IN THE SPOTLIGHT

STAFF

Q&A: Dr Yoshna Kooverjee, Senior Lecturer and Module Coordinator: Theory and Practice of Medicine, chats to Student Success Coach, Candice Chetty

Dr Kooverjee finds deep fulfilment in teaching, particularly when witnessing students evolve from idealistic beginners to mature and practical practitioners. She is dedicated to not just academic success, but the holistic development of her students, fostering a new generation of compassionate and capable doctors. Her forward-thinking perspectives on the impact of generative AI on the health professions underscores the importance of adapting educational approaches to prepare students for future challenges.

What is your role at the Medical School?

A senior lecturer co-ordinating Theory & Practice of Medicine modules for first and second year, I left private practice to join the School in 2020, ahead of our first intake of students. As we're a small department, I'm also involved, to a lesser degree, with the third-year and fourth-year students.

"What is most rewarding about teaching medical students?"

They are hardworking, goal-oriented and motivated to learn, which makes them wonderful to teach! What I enjoy most, though, is being part of their professional development: watching initial idealism develop into something more practical, mature and optimistic gives me hope for our profession.

Your most memorable teaching experience or success story?

Before joining the Medical School, my main teaching experience was presenting Ethics topics to doctors at CPD events. Ethics is notoriously dry, with late or unpopular timeslots on programmes. But, I worked hard at a relevant, engaging session for my first big presentation, using interactive case studies. As I was introduced, people were already heading for the exit – but those cases grabbed the audience's attention and even drew back some of the stragglers. I use this Socratic method with my medical students today, and it makes my job more interesting as well.



Dr Yoshna Kooverjee: Senior Lecturer and Module Coordinator: Theory and Practice of Medicine

Any highlights to share about being part of the Medical School?

There are so many, with just about everything being a 'first': the significance of welcoming our first cohort onto campus in-person, following our COVID-19 start; meeting every new batch of first years; seeing new student societies and witnessing fresh initiatives ... what a privilege to be part of this story.

"What I enjoy most, though, is being part of their professional development: watching initial idealism develop into something more practical."

Primary Health Care Education: a cornerstone of the modern health care education model by Marie Williams and Cindy Booyesen



Marie Williams, Community Platform Coordinator and Cindy Booyesen, Lecturer in Primary Health Care

Primary Health Care (PHC) is a whole-of-society approach to health that aims at ensuring the highest possible level of health and well-being by focusing on people's needs and meeting these needs as close as feasible to people's everyday environment. PHC is rooted in a commitment to social justice, equity, solidarity and participation.

Primary care is one aspect of PHC - a model of care that supports first-contact, accessible, continuous, comprehensive and coordinated person-focused care.

Since there is a shortage of doctors across South Africa (Mburu & George, 2017:1), Nelson Mandela University's Medical School undergraduate curriculum is aimed at preparing graduates to be PHC-oriented, fit-for-purpose and well-rounded generalists.

Utilising a PHC education model/approach places strong emphasis on PHC and early exposure to community-based activities within the Nelson Mandela Bay Health District (NMBHD) in the Eastern Cape.

Feet on the ground

Considering the growing demand for socially accountable (WHO, 2013) and fit-for-purpose doctors (Kiguli Malwadde, 2014:483), medical students require exposure to learning and training settings/clinical platforms. Similarly, community engagement is a necessary requirement for medical education (Rudolf, Reis & Gibbs et al, 2014) and a suitable learning environment for medical students.

To meet this need and drive home the potential for PHC to address inequalities, medical students may access non-governmental organisations (NGOs), PHC clinics and households within the NMBHD. During these visits, students conduct and complete assignments based on theory covered in class.

The content of theory lectures, the visits and assignment presentations are aligned with PHC priorities, initiatives, health indicators, disease prevention, health promotion activities and other critical pillars of this medical approach.



Cementing PHC education at our Medical School

According to an article by Cooper et al. (2023), titled 'Teaching Primary Care Theory to Promote General Practice Among Medical Students', while medical students recognise the importance of tackling health inequalities, they must be encouraged to realise that strong primary care, which is a key component of primary health care (PHC), is a key solution.

Therefore, an education based on the PHC approach is a cornerstone of modern medical education. This approach is introduced as early as year 1, theoretically and with community/clinical exposure, giving students the opportunity to relate theory to the actual experience and observation of contextual challenges, which is built on in subsequent years.

Various teaching methodologies are applied to deliver a PHC education, including the example below.

Every year, as a component of PHC and Public Health lectures, a mock conference is conducted. Acting as health ministers from various countries, the students examine the difficulties they have with a particular health indicator and devise a plan of action to meet the indicator's 2030 Sustainable Development goals.

This simulated approach is student-centred and prepares students to present research papers at conferences in future. The teaching methodology also strengthens public speaking, presentation and communication skills, and enhances personal and professional development as students collaborate with one another, sharing different viewpoints and increasing their knowledge.



Jordan Lindoor

1st year class representative

What does the term 'Mandela Doctor' mean to you?

The ideal doctor that can serve our communities anywhere in South Africa, can lead and inspire people to help others in a respectful manner, is professional in all regards, works well with others, cares for the community and the betterment of it, can effectively communicate with others regardless of culture or language and will, most definitely, stay in South Africa.

What, for you, are the key qualities or skills that make a successful medical student?

You need to have dedication, patience, intelligence and, most of all, time management skills!



Jordan Lindoor

"You need to have dedication, patience, intelligence and, most of all, time management skills!"

Kavir Dullabh,

3rd year class representative

What inspired you to study medicine at Nelson Mandela University Medical School?

My journey into medicine was quite unconventional. Initially, I wasn't accepted anywhere for the MBChB degree. I left home to start a BSc at the University of Pretoria. As I was about to start lectures, I received a late call from Mandela University. I came back home (to Gqeberha) to take up the opportunity to pursue my dream.

What advice would you give aspiring students considering a career in medicine?

You will need to self-reflect and decide whether or not this degree is for you. There are plenty of misconceptions out there about the MBChB degree. With so many students applying for the degree, the most that you can do is your best.



Kavir Dullabh

5. SCHOOL NEWS: EVENTS AND INITIATIVES

Diarrhoea and Antibiotics: an integrated lecture

“There is only one patient in front of you,” Dr Ntokozo Mzimela, Integrated Pathology lecturer, always tells her students. Together with Dr Mea Van Huyssteen, Clinical Pharmacology senior lecturer, Dr Mzimela facilitates integrated lectures to deconstruct the silos between medical disciplines.

In June, the pair lectured to third-year students on the critical topic of diarrhoea and antibiotics, which built on the first topic - combating microbial infections – and continues the theme of rational use of antimicrobials and the prevention of antimicrobial resistance, a growing global health concern.

Diarrhoeal disease is a critical cause of morbidity and mortality in South Africa, especially for children under five years old. The lecturers explored the inter-relational aspects between diarrhoea and antibiotics: diarrhoea of infective origin that needs antibiotic treatment, and antibiotic-induced diarrhoea.

The collaborative lecture approach relied on inputs from lecturers, students and external partners, divided according to learning objectives, with four of the eight objectives allocated to students, who prepared short videos covering

the content in a creative way, and which were later shared and scored.

Paediatrician, Dr Kagiso Mochankana, an infectious disease fellow from UKZN, joined the lecture virtually, giving a compelling and informative presentation titled, ‘Tiny tots and toxic spores: *C. difficile* in neonates’. Nestle Nutrition also shared insights about preventing and managing diarrhoeal disease through nutrition, with emphasis on paediatric populations.

Sessions were monitored by Ms Mbali’nhle Mohlakoana, an academic developer in the directorate of teaching development for teaching excellence at Mandela University. The directorate falls under the Dean of Learning and Teaching Collaboration (LT Collab).

*Dr Ntokozo Mzimela,
Lecturer in Integrated
Pathology*



Oath Taking Ceremony



“MANDELA DOCTORS OF THE FUTURE”

MEMORABLE MOMENT: Medical School director Dr Reno Morar and keynote speaker Professor Ntobeko Ntusi were delighted to be part of the Nelson Mandela University 1st Year White Coat Oath Taking Ceremony 2024 on 12 April, where medical students, wearing their traditional medical coats, pledged themselves in service to society, committing to the values and tenets of lifelong integrity, professionalism, care, compassion and ethical conduct as they recited the Hippocratic Oath. Professor Ntusi inspired our students to work hard in their quest to become medical professionals.



Dr Reno Morar And Professor Ntobeko Ntusi

We support #CrazySocks4Docs!



A fun, but meaningful, initiative to raise awareness about mental health struggles facing healthcare professionals, #CrazySocks4Docs encourages medical students, staff and others in the sector to wear bright, mismatched socks on the first Friday in June, in support of colleagues battling depression, anxiety or suicidal thoughts.

Supporters are challenged to share photos of their crazy socks on social media, inspired by the original movement founded in Australia in 2017, and sponsored locally by the Ithemba Foundation and Cipla South Africa.

Doctors and other healthcare staff are often seen as 'invincible caretakers' who burn the candle at both ends, dedicating their lives to others and neglecting their own well-being.

Mandela Uni's sock-wearing students and staff threw their support behind the global initiative and enjoyed a line-up of excellent guest speakers, including specialist psychiatrist Dr Carmen Groves, Emthonjeni Wellness Centre's Sheri-Ann Pietersen and lecturer and mental health advocate Dr Ntokozo Mzimela.



6. TAKING CARE OF THE CAREGIVERS OF THE FUTURE – TRANSFORMING LIVES THROUGH STUDENT FUNDING

Transforming Lives: the impact of bursaries on student success.

#MyStory: Duduzile Sibanyoni, 3rd-year medical student



“My happiness about being accepted to study medicine was short-lived, thanks to the reality of having no funds. Within days, I received ‘We regret to inform you ...’ emails in response to bursaries for which I had applied. With each rejection letter, my ambition to become a doctor faded.

I’m just a township girl who thought that she could dream big and actually do it. Gradually, I began internalising negative self-talk and losing hope.

Then, I turned things around! Reminiscing about my goal – wearing a white coat and saving lives – I recalled how happy I’d felt when promising my late grandparents that I’d become a doctor. I decided to be that doctor, with or without funding. I left home, travelling 16 hours in pursuit of my dream: to be Dr Sibanyoni.

Being in the Eastern Cape, far from home and with no bursary or any other financial back-up, I was simply a black woman with a calling to heal people. And I was welcomed, with warm hearts and hands, to Nelson Mandela University Medical School. With their help, I applied for and received a bursary a week later. The financial hardship faced by medical students has spurred me to create my own bursary scheme one day. A township girl can dream big and become a doctor.”

“Then, I turned things around! Reminiscing about my goal – wearing a white coat and saving lives – I recalled how happy I’d felt when promising my late grandparents that I’d become a doctor. I decided to be that doctor, with or without funding.”

ADDRESSING THE FINANCIAL PLIGHT OF MEDICAL STUDENTS

By Candice Chetty

Amidst the pursuit of academic excellence and a noble ambition to serve humanity, a significant challenge looms large for medical and co-students across South African universities: financial strain.

As the cost of higher education rises, many aspiring doctors find themselves grappling with financial burdens that threaten to hinder their journey towards becoming healthcare professionals.

The cost of tuition fees, accommodation, living expenses and limited bursary funding are often insurmountable obstacles, affecting not just academic performance but also mental health and well-being.

Health sciences education sector stakeholders – universities, government agencies, philanthropic organisations and the private sector – recognise and want to find sustainable solutions to the ongoing crisis. Options include expanding

access to need-based scholarships and increasing funding for bursary programmes.

As members of the academic community and concerned citizens, it is incumbent upon us to rally behind our medical students and support initiatives aimed at alleviating their financial plight. We are deeply grateful to donors who have stepped up to the plate with scholarships and other financing initiatives.

Together, we can and must do more for our future doctors and co-health professionals as we collectively seek to ensure that health professional education is accessible and affordable to all our students.



HOW YOU CAN HELP

NELSON MANDELA UNIVERSITY TRUST MEDICAL SCHOOL BURSARIES AND SCHOLARSHIP DONATIONS

The Nelson Mandela University Trust (IT48/2001(E)) is one of the fundraising arms of the University. Nelson Mandela University is the sole beneficiary of the Trust. The Trust is registered with SARS as a Public Benefit Organisation (PBO Registration Number: 130003878).

The Trust may issue Section 18A tax certificates for certain categories of donations that qualify for tax rebates. Amendments to the B-BBEE framework also mean that donors who support Black South Africans, as defined in the BB-BEE codes, may receive certification to assist them with their B-BBEE scorecard.

Sound corporate governance is at the heart of the responsibilities of 11 Trustees. The Trust is independently audited each year and has achieved unqualified audit opinions for many years. More information on the Trust, as well as copies of its annual reports and audited financial statements, can be found at <https://srma.mandela.ac.za/Nelson-Mandela-University-Trust>.

Comments, compliments, complaints? Please connect with us to share your thoughts and feedback on our Medical School newsletter, **The Pulse**.

Your voice counts. Please send us suggestions, stories and ideas for future issues – this is your newsletter, and we'd love to grow it with you.

Contact us. Drop us an email @ candice.chetty@mandela.ac.za

GOT A MINUTE? TAKE OUR SURVEY

Answer these quick questions to help **The Pulse** team improve our newsletter. Together, we can!

<https://forms.office.com/r/0Y3vx0t1YH>

DONATIONS: STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE



1) ENGAGEMENT

Medical School engages with potential donors



2) EMAIL CONFIRMATION

Donor sends email to Medical School **sherwin.king@mandela.ac.za** confirming amount and general conditions (e.g. first-year)



3) GENERATION OF INVOICE

Email confirmation sent to Ms Jennilee Bezuidenhout **jennilee.bezuidenhout@mandela.ac.za** who issues Trust invoice to donor



4) ISSUING OF INVOICE

The invoice: bank details + short information form for Section 18A tax certificate



5) PAYMENT RECEIPT

Donor pays invoice – funds transferred to Financial Aid under donor conditions



6) FUNDING ALLOCATION

Medical School + Financial Aid allocate funding to student/s in need



7) ISSUING OF S18A CERTIFICATE

The Trust issues thank you letter + Section 18A tax certificate



8) ISSUING OF B-BBEE CERTIFICATE

B-BBEE certification (if required) arranged with Faculty of Health Sciences after funds have been disbursed.