

MANDELA MED PULSE

Medical School NEWSLETTER

Volume 3 | February 2025



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1. FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK: DR RENO MORAR, MEDICAL SCHOOL

As we embark on a new chapter in 2025, we welcome new staff members and students to our Medical School and Faculty of Health Sciences family.

My best wishes to all staff and students this year. May we grasp the opportunities that come our way with excitement and passion and conquer our challenges with renewed vigour and compassion.

We always need to acknowledge those who came before us, and so we dutifully bid fond farewell to a much-loved stalwart of our school, Marie Williams, and wish her everything of the best in her new ventures.

Our staff are the bedrock from which our students find their wings in the world; the professional expertise of our whole team is matched only by their heart-led commitment to nurturing the talented staff and student colleagues who enter our doors each year.

In welcoming and embracing several new staff members this semester, we are delighted to embark on new journeys and adventures with them. May your years at the Medical School be fruitful and memorable.

As we share this issue with all our staff and students, we wish to explore a diverse range of topics, including an analysis of Universal Health Coverage and the NHI act, Mr Wandisile Grootboom's exploration of the benefits of positive mental health among our students, Prof Elma de Vries on driving compassionate change in healthcare and a celebration of our talented staff, who have been honoured with recognition and awards across the board.



Our students have been equally successful, making their mark in national sports, including netball, and sharing their tried-and-tested tips for success with our first-year cohort, who would do well to heed the sage advice of their older peers, who've "been there, done that" and earned their scrubs!

This issue is once again an invitation to you all to remain committed and participative members of the Medical School family. These newsletters reflect you as willing colleagues and valuable activists, as we regularly check in and monitor the pulse of our diverse and vibrant Medical School and faculty team.

Warm regards,

Dr Reno Morar
Director, Medical School
Nelson Mandela University

2. WELCOME TO OUR NEW STAFF MEMBERS

1. MR THABO SEMPE

LECTURER: PRIMARY HEALTH CARE, DEPARTMENT OF MEDICAL PRACTICE



The Department of Medical Practice proudly welcomes Mr Thabo Sempe, a Primary Health lecturer with a deep commitment to community health and medical education. Originally from Gqeberha, he offers a wealth of experience in public and primary health care.

After completing undergraduate studies, Mr Sempe worked as a professional nurse in both South Africa and the Middle East. This experience sparked a passion for public and primary health, culminating in the successful completion of a master's degree in public health. He also holds a Bachelor of Nursing and a Postgraduate Diploma in Clinical HIV Management.

Now, Mr Sempe is "happy to be part of a team focused on training and developing future Nelson Mandela medical doctors who will go on to serve communities."

2. MS YOLANDA BELANI

DEPARTMENTAL SECRETARY, DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN BIOLOGY AND INTEGRATED PATHOLOGY



Her professional journey began in 2007 at the National Health Laboratory Services, where she served for eight years, gaining valuable experience in administrative coordination and organisational efficiency. In 2015, she joined Nelson Mandela University as an Administrative Assistant in the School of Accounting. Over her nine-year tenure, she played a pivotal role in streamlining processes and supporting the department's operational goals.

On 1 November 2024, she took on the role of Departmental Secretary at the Medical School's Department of Human Biology and Integrated Pathology. Here, she oversees a wide range of administrative responsibilities, ensuring smooth day-to-day operations while fostering collaboration between staff, students, and stakeholders.

Ms Belani is a dedicated and experienced administrative professional with a career spanning over 15 years in administrative roles across various sectors. She holds a National Diploma in Office Management and Technology, a B-Tech in Management, and is currently pursuing studies in Monitoring and Evaluation to further enhance her skills and expertise.

Beyond her professional achievements, Ms Belani is passionate about personal growth and maintaining a balanced lifestyle.

3. DR KHULISO RAMASHIA

5TH-YEAR CLINICAL COORDINATOR, DEPARTMENT OF MEDICAL PRACTICE



Dr Ramashia, originally from Gauteng, has a diverse background in healthcare, having completed his internship and community service before serving as a medical officer and registrar in general surgery.

With a strong interest in medical education and training, he has developed a passion for effective communication at various levels within the healthcare sector.

Dr Ramashia is dedicated to empowering the public through his online presence, promoting positive health-seeking behaviours.

He is a devoted husband and father to two vibrant young boys.

4. MS KHANYISA NOMDA

DEPARTMENTAL SECRETARY: DEPARTMENT OF MEDICAL PRACTICE



Ms Nomda is a dedicated and accomplished Departmental Secretary for the Department of Medical Practice. She holds a Bachelor of Administration degree and an Honours degree in Public Administration, and her professional journey reflects a commitment to excellence and growth in the field of administration.

She began her career in 2020 as an Intern Secretary at Walter Sisulu University. During her six-month tenure, she honed

her organisational and administrative skills, gaining valuable experience in managing office operations and providing support to the department.

Following her internship, Ms Nomda transitioned to the Walter Sisulu University Marketing and Communications Office as a call centre operator, where she developed exceptional communication and customer service skills.

Ms Nomda joined Nelson Mandela University in October 2021 as an Administrative Assistant for the Department of Economics. This position gave her advanced administrative expertise, gaining the necessary experience to excel in her current role.

On 1 January this year, Ms Nomda was appointed Departmental Secretary at the Medical School's Department of Medical Practice. She oversees a wide range of administrative responsibilities, ensuring the smooth day-to-day operations of the department. Her role involves coordinating between staff, students, and stakeholders, fostering collaboration, and maintaining efficient administrative processes.

Beyond her professional achievements, Ms Nomda embodies a "work hard, play hard" mindset. She values investing in personal relationships and cherishes quality time with family, friends, and herself.

5. DR AKHTER GOOLAM MAHOMED

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR AND HEAD OF THE DEPARTMENT OF MEDICINE



Prof Akhter Goolam Mahomed has extensive experience in private practice as a Specialist Physician, Pulmonologist, and Intensivist, and has filled prominent international roles throughout his career.

He worked previously at Louis Pasteur Private Hospital, Pretoria Heart Hospital and Raslow Private Hospital, also in Pretoria.

Prof Mahomed obtained his Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor

of Surgery (MBBCh) in 1984 at University of the Witwatersrand Medical School and is a Fellow of the College of Physicians of the College of Medicine of South Africa, FCP (SA).

Prof Mahomed's high profile positions include Principal Consultant Physician in the Department of Internal Medicine, Hillbrow and Johannesburg hospitals, Department of Medicine senior lecturer at WITS, Chief Specialist and Head of Intensive Care Unit, Dr George Mukhari Academic Hospital, and Head and Associate Professor of Intensive Care at Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University.

His international expertise includes Honorary Research Fellow and Academic Visitor, Host Defence Unit, Brompton Hospital Department of Thoracic Medicine at the National Heart and Lung Institute in London, United Kingdom, membership of the American Thoracic Society and European Respiratory Society and Honorary Research Fellowship of the European Respiratory Society.

Former National President of the Islamic Medical Association and a Council member of the South African Thoracic Society and Critical Care Societies of South Africa, Prof Mahomed was awarded a Gold Medal for medical services to former South African President Nelson Mandela by then President Jacob Zuma in 2014.

6. DR SAIENDHRA MOODLEY

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR AND HEAD OF THE PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT



Prof Saiendhra Moodley is jointly appointed at the Eastern Cape Department of Health and joins the University as a public health medicine specialist from the University of Pretoria, where he was a senior lecturer in the Division of Behaviour and Health Management Sciences.

Dr Moodley has extensive experience within both academia and the South African health system. Dr Moodley completed his

medical training (MBChB) at the University of Cape Town, and his specialist training in public health medicine and a PhD in Public Health at the University of Pretoria (UP).

In addition to his specialist qualifications (Fellowship of the College of Public Health Medicine (SA) and MMed), Dr Moodley holds a Diploma in Mental Health from the Colleges of Medicine of South Africa, a Postgraduate Diploma in Tropical Medicine and Health from UP, and a Postgraduate Diploma in Health Systems Management from UP.

He has previously worked at the Office of Health Standards Compliance, in the Department of Public Health Medicine at Steve Biko Academic Hospital/UP, and in the Specialised Services Support Directorate of the Provincial Department of Health in the Western Cape.

Dr Moodley is President of the College of Public Health Medicine, a constituent college of the Colleges of Medicine of South Africa (CMSA), and holds several other CMSA roles.

Dr Moodley has previously served as Vice-President and President of the Public Health Association of South Africa and is currently one of South Africa's representatives on the Congress Management Committee for the World Congress of Public Health in Cape Town in 2026.

3. IN THE SPOTLIGHT : STAFF

CELEBRATING A LEGACY

HONOURING MARIE WILLIAMS AS SHE EMBARKS ON RETIREMENT

The Medical School extends its heartfelt appreciation to Marie Williams for her dedicated service since the school's inception in 2020. As the first Community Platform Coordinator, she played a pivotal role in the design and implementation of the Community-Based Practice curriculum for the pre-clinical MBChB years. Her contributions have provided students with invaluable opportunities to apply their knowledge in real-world community settings, reinforcing the University's commitment to socially responsive medical education.

Mrs Williams was instrumental in helping staff and students establish ties and strengthen relationships with local community organisations in the Missionvale surrounds. We extend our sincere gratitude for her years of service and wish her a well-deserved retirement filled with joy, new opportunities, and meaningful experiences.



BRAVE NEW WORLD

DR RENO MORAR ON NAVIGATING THE ROAD TO UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE IN SOUTH AFRICA



As Director of the newly-established Medical School in the Faculty of Health Sciences at Nelson Mandela University, I am honoured to lead South Africa's tenth and youngest medical school. Our students exude an infectious spirit of hope and enthusiasm as we progress toward graduating our first cohort of Mandela Doctors in 2026.

While navigating our journey at the medical school and within the faculty, our goal is to successfully graduate composite health

professionals who are equipped to serve our communities. This journey is inextricably linked to a larger national goal: achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC) for South Africa.

With the signing of the National Health Insurance (NHI) Act into law, South Africa stands at a pivotal moment in its healthcare journey. Achieving UHC promises equitable access to quality healthcare for all South Africans, regardless of income or location. But transforming this vision of UHC into reality requires much more than policy reflected in the NHI; it calls for robust planning, thoughtful resource allocation, and, above all, collaboration across sectors.

Our nation's medical schools and higher education and training institutions are essential to the UHC journey in their support of South African's human resources for health strategy. This strategy provides a foundation for advancing universal health coverage by ensuring healthcare professionals are appropriately trained to meet the demands of a redefined healthcare system.

These institutions play an instrumental role in building a workforce ready to support the NHI system. Lessons from our response to the recent COVID-19 pandemic have already shown us the power of unity; as we move forward, this spirit of collaboration between the public and private sectors will be crucial in shaping a resilient and inclusive healthcare system that can achieve UHC.

A Balancing Act

The NHI Act sets out to provide universal access to quality healthcare services, bridging disparities and delivering equitable access to essential services for all South Africans. However, the path to UHC is about more than access; it requires quality, efficiency, and sustainability across a restructured healthcare landscape.

The government's role here is pivotal – responsible leadership, resource allocation, and effective oversight are critical to building public confidence. This transition poses complex governance and constitutional challenges.

Implementing the NHI Act requires establishing new accountability mechanisms, redefining roles, and reassessing funding streams. Addressing these structural challenges – especially in under-resourced and underserved regions – demands both strategic mindset and practical capacity to adapt quickly to evolving needs.

Many of South Africa's rural and township communities face significant shortages in healthcare resources and access to quality services. For NHI to succeed in these settings, dedicated efforts in providing adequate healthcare infrastructure and equipment, staffing, and strong governance and leadership are essential.

Achieving the ambitious goals of NHI without a solid foundation in governance and accountability would be a costly misstep. The success of NHI demands careful, evidence-based planning with clear goals and accountability.

This approach will require decades of commitment, with the understanding that universal healthcare frameworks often take generations to mature fully. NHI will not be a quick fix, but with meticulous preparation, it has the potential to become a sustainable, far-reaching health system intervention.

The Digital Landscape

Government planning must also account for the rapidly changing landscape of healthcare needs and technology. South Africa's healthcare system must prepare not only for current demands but also for future challenges, including digital healthcare infrastructure and data security.

Protecting patient information and ensuring uninterrupted services is paramount in a digital age where data breaches are a constant risk. Recent experiences with cybersecurity issues in the National Health Laboratory Services underscore the importance of proactive measures in this domain.

Unity is strength

The pandemic has taught us the power of unity in times of crisis. During COVID-19, South Africa's public and private healthcare sectors demonstrated resilience, adaptability, and a shared commitment to public health. This partnership was instrumental in resource-sharing, patient care, and vaccine distribution.

It serves as a powerful reminder that as the NHI system is implemented over the next 10 to 15 years, the system will benefit from a collaborative model where the expertise and resources of the private and public sectors complement each other in the public interest and wider community access.

Collaboration between the public and private sectors must focus on expanding healthcare infrastructure, enhancing service delivery in underserved areas, and integrating innovative technologies for more efficient patient care. By working together, public and private sectors can foster a healthcare environment that maximises strengths and mitigates gaps in service.

To sustain the implementation of the NHI system, South Africa needs healthcare professionals equipped to handle both the scope and scale of this vision. Medical and health professions education must adapt and evolve to meet these challenges, training future healthcare providers not only in clinical skills but also in adaptability, empathy, and resilience.

At Nelson Mandela University's Faculty of Health Sciences, we prioritise these qualities, embedding community-based learning and problem-solving into our curriculum to prepare graduates for a diverse and demanding healthcare landscape.

Students experience firsthand the disparities within South Africa's healthcare system, and this allows our students to develop the necessary understanding of the realities their future patients face.

Our programme equips them to work in a wide array of settings – from rural clinics with limited resources to state-of-the-art urban facilities. This holistic training ensures our graduates are capable of addressing the multifaceted healthcare challenges with the empathy and innovation necessary to serve our communities across South Africa.

Together, We Can

The journey toward UHC and the implementation of NHI system is both inspiring and challenging. It is a bold declaration of South Africa's commitment to affordable universal access to quality health care services (and) healthcare equity – and must be approached with open eyes and a steady hand.

Our success will depend on a combination of strategic planning, effective governance, and a commitment to collaboration across sectors.

South Africa has a unique opportunity to build a healthcare system that is equitable and resilient. By prioritising these foundational steps, we can pave the way for a healthcare system that genuinely serves all South Africans, one that fulfils the promise of our constitution and reflects the spirit of our democracy. The future of our healthcare system is within our hands, but only if we approach it with responsibility, collaboration, and a deep commitment to the well-being of all our people.

It will be an intensely proud South African moment when we graduate our first 45 Mandela Doctors from our medical school in 2026! As South Africans, we also want to be proudly South African about the health system we build for and with our people.

The original version of this article first appeared in ModernMedia on 20 November 2024

<https://www.quicknews.co.za/2024/11/20/navigating-the-road-to-universal-health-coverage-in-south-africa/>

“I had a deep awareness of suffering, and that systems can make suffering even worse if people don’t care, and I have often wondered: can’t one manufacture a vaccine for health workers, (so) that you can inject caring into them - wouldn’t that be wonderful? Because the experience is so often that people don’t care, and it affects the lives of so many vulnerable people who want to access care. It makes me very sad about where we are in terms of healthcare in this country: systems not working as they could be working if people cared. I guess I will be a ‘bittereinder’ and keep on making the little difference that I can, where and when I can.”



Prof Elma de Vries was interviewed by Dr Maria Christodoulos for the Awakening Doctor podcast series, which explores the personal stories of those who work in the medical and health professions and aims to reveal the human side of being a medical professional.

Listen to the podcast: <https://www.awakeningdoctor.com/podcast/episode/79cbd3b6/prof-elma-de-vries-doing-what-her-hands-find-to-do> Box/

Prof de Vries spoke passionately about how hard it is for transgender patients, as a marginalised population, to access the care that they need. She reflected on what a difference it would make if all health professionals could see the human being first and create safe, affirming spaces for all patients.

Prof de Vries is one of the authors of the South African Gender Affirming Healthcare Guideline ([SAHCS GAHC guidelines.pdf](#)). Based on her PhD research, she argues that gender-affirming healthcare is a gift for medical education, enabling a rethink of power dynamics in a consultation, as well as between educators and medical students.

Prof de Vries reflected on her journey from growing up in apartheid-era South Africa to becoming a passionate advocate for marginalised communities and a champion for gender-affirming care. She also described how challenging it is to establish a new medical school in the Eastern Cape, and how determined she is to instil a caring ethic in medical students and to advocate for a more compassionate healthcare system.

Her wish, said Prof de Vries, was that medical students would recognise that empathy and perseverance could inspire profound change in healthcare.

A CONVERSATION WITH MR WANDISILE GROOTBOOM

THRIVING BEYOND THE STETHOSCOPE – PROMOTING POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH AMONG MEDICAL STUDENTS

Medical School Success Coach Candice Chetty chatted to Mr Wandisile Grootboom, a Lecturer in Clinical Pharmacology in the Department of Human Biology and Integrated Pathology at the Medical School, who is co-researcher behind a study on the mental health of university medical students, the challenges they face and the importance of promoting Positive Mental Health (PMH).



Why is mental health such a critical issue for medical students?

Medical school is extremely demanding. Students are under constant pressure to excel academically, which can lead to stress, anxiety, and burnout. Compared to their peers in other fields, medical students face higher rates of mental health issues. In South Africa, the situation is compounded by socio-economic challenges, making it even harder for students to cope.

Your study focuses on Positive Mental Health (PMH). Can you explain what that is?

PMH is an approach that goes beyond just treating mental illness. It's about nurturing emotional stability, personal growth, and resilience. We want students to thrive, not just survive. By focusing on coping mechanisms and personal development, students can better manage stress and maintain mental well-being throughout their training.

How important is social and emotional support in this context?

It's vital. Our research showed that students with strong support systems, whether from living in university residences or having spiritual connections, reported much better mental health. Creating an environment where students can openly discuss their struggles without fear of stigma is crucial.

What are some solutions you recommend for improving mental health among medical students?

One effective solution is incorporating mental health education into the curriculum from the beginning. Teaching students how to recognise and manage their mental health early on equips them with essential tools. Additionally, offering counselling services, coaching, wellness programmes, and peer mentoring will further strengthen students' resilience.

How can medical schools help students succeed in both academics and life?

By fostering emotional, social, and spiritual well-being, medical schools can help students not only succeed academically but also become compassionate healthcare professionals. Creating a holistic support system is key to helping students thrive in their careers and beyond.

Full research article available at:

Vagiri, R., Mphasha, M., Bangalee, V., Grootboom, W., Makhele, L., & Padayachee, N. (2024). Thriving beyond the stethoscope: Unveiling positive mental health among medical students at a university in South Africa. *Dialogues in Health*, 5, 100188. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dialog.2024.100188>



"Nelson Mandela was a passionate boxer, who shared great lessons from the sport of boxing, encouraging people to keep active, fit and lead a healthy lifestyle. It's therefore fitting that Boxing should be an official sport code at Nelson Mandela University."

The inaugural Madibaz Boxing Team, led by Medical School senior instructional designer Ra'ees Khan, punched above its weight at the University Sports South Africa (USSA) Championships late last year, bagging a bronze medal and all-star performances.

The team made its debut at the East London event, which was hosted by Walter Sisulu University in December.

"The team of six athletes put on a fantastic performance characterised by class, sheer grit and sportsmanship, battling in numerous bouts throughout the Championships," says Ra'ees. "Five athletes made it to the semifinals, bringing home one bronze medal. This is an exceptional achievement, considering that some athletes have only seen boxing gloves for the first time."

A passionate educator, Ra'ees stepped up to the role of team manager to establish and lead the University's very first boxing team.

"It is proof that we can cultivate and nurture raw talent from grass roots to National Championships, paving the way for many more to follow."



THE GRIT

The road to the USSA Championships is not an easy one and doesn't happen overnight, Ra'ees explains.

The journey started in 2021 with the formation of a competitive team. "Getting to this level of readiness (is underpinned) by many early mornings, late nights, weekends and rigorous preparations - and participation in numerous local and developmental events and tournaments for experience.

"It's clear that success in any aspect of life can only be achieved through collaboration, unity and support from a community; the coaching teams, management and sports staff, medical personnel, sponsors, stakeholders, families and supporters all deserve appreciation."

The team's mission extends far beyond medals, he explains, encapsulating a journey that provides opportunities, opens doors and has a positive impact on both individuals and society.

"Our mandate enacts the sentiments of Nelson Mandela, (who advocated for) the role of sports in the promotion of social cohesion, dignity and liberation."



Leading by example

An experienced athlete and manager, Ra'ees has successfully used education, sport and boxing as tools of empowerment and social development to overcome poverty, substance abuse, gangsterism and other challenges in underprivileged communities.

He has received numerous accolades and awards for his society-driven work, including being recognised as a Lead SA Hero in 2018.

What makes him get up in the morning to live a life of purpose?

"It is only my moral duty to serve humanity to the best of my ability, to be an agent of change, enabling people to believe in themselves and ignite their aspirations for limitless potential, while capacitating systematic processes (to aid this)," he says. Ra'ees views education and sports as key to liberation, and he believes in paying it forward: serving humanity is a duty owed in gratitude to the many great mentors who championed him, he says.

His mentors, he says, were "A light in the dark, words of wisdom and love, exceptional craft masters, someone who believed in me, before I believed in myself, someone who nurtured my potential before I even knew I had any."



"Boxing is egalitarian. In the ring, rank, age, colour, and wealth are irrelevant. When you are circling your opponent, probing his strengths and weaknesses, you are not thinking about his colour or social status."

"Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire. It has the power to unite people in a way that little else does. It speaks to youth in a language they understand."



Dr Ntokozo Mzimela, a lecturer in Microbiology and module coordinator at the Medical School, was recently honoured at the 2024 African Health Excellence Summit & Awards.

The event took place on 30 November in Sandton, Johannesburg. Dr Mzimela received the prestigious Ambassador Certificate in the presence of Dr Selepe, Acting COO of the Gauteng Department of Health, and Dr Tshabalala, HOD of the KZN Department of Health.

This recognition was awarded for her role as an African Continent Ambassador, acknowledging her dedication to advancing healthcare excellence across Africa. The award, presented by Dr Eric Khumalo, Board Chairperson of AHEO, included a poignant quote by Maya Angelou: "They may forget your name, but they'll never forget how you made them feel."

Reflecting on her journey, Dr Mzimela shared: "In my role as a lecturer in Microbiology and module coordinator at the medical school, I have had the privilege of engaging deeply with the vibrant healthcare community across Africa.

"Recently, I also served as a leader for the African Health Excellence Sub Committee, where I was entrusted with the responsibility of leading AHEO ambassadors in uncovering the inspiring stories of dedication and innovation that characterise our continent's healthcare landscape."

This experience deepened Dr Mzimela's passion for uplifting others and reinforced the vital role of healthcare professionals, "from bustling cities to remote villages, who are committed to improving lives and enhancing community well-being."

Dr Mzimela highlighted the importance of celebrating these achievements, which reflect not only individual success but also the collective spirit of collaboration: "As we celebrate the achievements of our nominees and winners, we honour not only individual accomplishments, but also the collective spirit of collaboration that drives progress in healthcare across Africa.

"Together, we are paving the way for a healthier future, and I look forward to the remarkable advancements that lie ahead. Congratulations to all the nominees and winners; your hard work and dedication are truly commendable!"



CONGRATULATIONS!

MEDICAL SCHOOL STAFF SHINE AT FACULTY AND INSTITUTIONAL AWARD

BY SAVANIA NAGIAH

The 2024 academic year saw several wins for the Medical School, with three staff members honoured at the Faculty of Health Science Scholarly Spotlight Recognition event. Mr Philanathi Mabena, Mr Joastin Naidoo and Mrs Cindy Booyesen were recognised for their contributions to teaching and learning, and scholarly excellence.

Cindy Booyesen

A lecturer in Primary Healthcare in the Department of Medical Practice, Mrs Booyesen received the Faculty Peer Recognition Award in acknowledgment of her unwavering dedication and service, commitment and hard work.

As a valued team member, she has played a key role in the Theory and Practice of Medicine and Clinical Skills and Reasoning Modules. Her expertise contributed to the interprofessional nature of education that is upheld by the faculty, serving as a member of the IPE committee and facilitating the committee events.

"I'm humbled by the acknowledgment, and it makes all the hard work and going the extra mile worthwhile; it is a reminder that one should always show appreciation."

Mr Joastin Naidoo

Mr Joastin Naidoo, Lecturer in Human Anatomy, received the Faculty Emerging Teacher Award and was further recognised at the Vice Chancellor Awards.

Mr Naidoo, who plays a fundamental role in basic medical science teaching at first-year and second-year level, bases his teaching philosophy on creating an environment, both internal and external to the classroom, that is conducive to the holistic development of his students, while simultaneously inspiring critical thinking.

Mr Naidoo grounds his teaching in three key areas: seeking to guide, rather than instruct; encouraging curiosity and discouraging blind acceptance of information, and prioritising respect during all interactions.

Mr Naidoo presented his research entitled "They/Them – a step towards inclusivity in anatomical education: a collaborative auto-ethnography" at the SAAHE conference in 2023, a testament to his commitment to inclusion in education.



Describing his approach to teaching at Mandela University, Mr Naidoo said: "I am quite grateful that my beliefs regarding learning and teaching strongly align with the University approach of a humanising pedagogy. Prior to joining the University in 2020, I had always felt strongly about seeing a student as more than just a student number."



Mr Philanathi Mabena

Mr Mabena, a lecturer in Human Physiology in the Department of Human Biology and Integrated Pathology, received the prestigious award of Emerging Teacher of the Year at Nelson Mandela University. This remarkable achievement was announced at the VC awards ceremony.

Mr Mabena joined the Medical School in 2020. He acknowledged the honour of being part of the fruition of the dream that is the Mandela Medical School, and praised his fellow staff members for their contribution to fostering a young, dynamic academic environment based on teaching excellence. He also was grateful for the opportunity to further his teaching capabilities through resources and programmes such as ECAAP.

Acknowledging his students, he said: "It would be improper of me not to mention the students themselves, who have forwarded me the platform to meaningfully contribute to their learning experiences through my teaching practices which, at their core, are the student-centric approaches."



Mandela Medical School is exceptionally proud of the achievements of these members of staff and their unwavering contribution to the dream of the Mandela Doctor.

A Q&A with Ms Candice Chetty and Dr Mea Van Huyssteen

Marilize Botha, a standout player from the Nelson Mandela Bay Senior B team, delivered an impressive performance at the SPAR National Netball Championships, held from 1 to 7 December 2024 at Ellis Park, Johannesburg. Known for her remarkable skills and dedication on the court, Marilize plays a pivotal role in key positions such as Goalkeeper (GK) and Goal Defence (GD). Her passion for the game and commitment to excellence make her a true asset to the Nelson Mandela Bay netball community.

How do you balance netball and academics?

It's not always easy and sometimes one takes preference over another. However, each supplied some sort of escape that I needed when I felt overwhelmed by the amount of academic work or the pressure of wanting to perform and do well in the team. What helped me most was surrounding myself with people who were hardworking, both on the court and in academics.



With your twin passions of sport and medicine, would a team doctor or sports medicine career path interest you?

Like many medical students, I have considered various specialisation options, if the opportunity arises. Sports medicine is one of those, but in the next few years, gaining more practical experience in the different fields of medicine will help me with that decision.

How best can netball students continue their sport at university?

Follow [@madibaznetball](#) on Instagram and look out for trial dates. If you just enjoy a good time with other students who love the sport and are not too competitive, we have a medical netball team, Super Scrubs, that participates in the Campus league every year. Follow them on Instagram [@super_scrubs_](#) and send a message asking to be added to the WhatsApp group.

SOUNDS OF ANATOMY:

A CELEBRATION OF WORLD ANATOMY DAY 2024

By Mr Joastin Naidoo

After a successful World Anatomy Day celebration in 2023, the Department of Human Biology and Integrated Pathology again hosted an event which promotes the discipline of anatomy and celebrates the development of anatomical sciences by highlighting the important role it plays in medical sciences.

This year, the theme was 'Sounds of Anatomy', focusing on the subject of anatomy being present in, and at the core of, several health professions working together for the benefit of the patient, akin to music in an orchestra.

The message was that learning can be fun, and we played games to prove it!

Students from the Medical Society assisted as gamemasters for the perennial favourites, Pin-the-Uvula and Anatomical Pictionary, and created a hip (mind the pun) new game called The Anatomist, in which their fellow classmates' knowledge was tested.

Artistic talent was on full display in the anatomical art competition. Students interpreted the theme in various ways, including depictions of ultrasound, 'lub-and-dub' heart sounds as well as the auditory pathway, amongst others. Worthy winners were first-year Zariya Suleman, for 'Colourful Rhythms', and Zenande Nduvane, a second-year student, for 'Pulse it, Black'. Our third-year and overall winner was Shari Nandlal, for 'I can't find a pulse, my heart won't start anymore' – a nod to singer Taylor Swift.

Third-year MBChB students Jaime Anderson, Luyanda Mtshali and Kavir Dullabh were exceptional as programme directors. As part of efforts to promote interprofessional education, the keynote address was presented by Mrs Candice Collins, a local occupational therapist, who shared insights into the role of an occupational therapist, and the importance of anatomy within the profession.

Second-year students presented their dissection hall discoveries in the form of mini-research presentations, with joint winners Tiaan Nortje and Majara Moshoeshoe taking top places for a case report on acute epidural haematoma and an anatomical analysis of the mitral valve respectively.

We were beautifully entertained by Mathew Draai, student pianist from the music department, and a memorable spoken word performance from first-year MBChB student Yanelisiwe Ndovela, who presented an enthralling multilingual piece that kept her audience hooked, weaving through the sounds of the human body, from beating heart to the deep heaves of breath.



Special thanks to Elsevier for sponsoring the event prizes, and to all students and staff who hosted and participated.

INAUGURAL INTERPROFESSIONAL EDUCATION EVENT

On 17 October, King's Beach became the backdrop for an exciting new initiative: the inaugural Interprofessional Education (IPE) collaboration event, which brought together some 80 third-year Mandela University students from the Medical School, Paramedics, and Emergency Medical Care (EMC).

This groundbreaking event aimed to bridge the gap between disciplines, helping students understand the unique roles and skills each profession contributes to saving lives.

Organised by the Medical School, the initiative was the brainchild of Dr James Marais, a clinical module coordinator.

"Interprofessional Education Day is for the integration of our skills," Dr Marais says. "We teach medical doctors, nurses, and paramedics, and their work coincides, but they are only exposed to each other once they are in a clinical setting, which is a big problem."

While nursing students couldn't attend this year, plans are underway to include them in future IPE days to make the collaboration even more comprehensive.



Teamwork and skills for the win

Working in groups of 10 and rotating through five hands-on stations simulating real-world emergency situations, students enjoyed several activities, including:

- ▶ Extracting a patient from the water
- ▶ Performing CPR
- ▶ Transporting the patient via jet ski
- ▶ Intubating the patient
- ▶ Inserting a chest drain using a lamb rib.

This immersive approach gave students practical experience while fostering teamwork and collaboration between the disciplines.

A collaborative effort

The event's success was made possible through collaboration between the Medical School and the EMC Department. Paul Allan (Head of Department for EMC) and Lamla Makazula played pivotal roles in bringing the idea to life. Additionally, Travis Trower and Jean Rossouw from the Ocean Sciences Campus elevated the experience by providing vital gear, including intubation equipment, ventilators, jet skis, kayaks, and even a quad bike.

Despite starting the day with rain and strong winds, the EMC team demonstrated their adaptability and resilience, setting a powerful example for the students.



CLEAN-UP AT THE MISSIONVALE MEDICINAL GARDEN

“The traditional African healing system is favourably located to cross all strategic boundaries, since it is based on a holistic approach to maintain a balance between all aspects of being human ... ”

- Dr Mea van Huyssteen

The first collaborative medicinal garden spring clean-up event was held on 6 November 2024. The event was co-hosted by the Missionvale senior management office, the Medical School and the Horticulture department.

Community partners involved included members of the Nelson Mandela Bay Traditional Leaders and Nyangazezizwe traditional healers' association.

The primary activities of the day were to pick up garden litter and label the medicinal plants according to their isiXhosa names. The highlight was the tree planting ceremony, during which traditional health practitioners blessed the garden.

The aim of the medicinal garden project is to collaboratively develop the garden into a physical resource and intellectual platform that links together all the strategic areas of academia, including learning and teaching, research, and community engagement.

The traditional African healing system is favourably located to cross all strategic boundaries, since it is based on a holistic approach to maintain a balance between all aspects of being human, which includes physical, mental, emotional, environmental and spiritual aspects.

African traditional health practitioners are the custodians of African culture, knowledge and practices and provide a crucial link in the University's decolonisation project .

The project's two primary outcomes

- Fostering recognition and inclusion of traditional African health and health practitioners
- Supporting sustainable environmental stewardship.

The administrative agreements are being directed through the community engagement office and a detailed phased project plan will be co-constructed to ensure community stakeholder participation and shared decision-making assisted by the greater community.

STUDENT VOICES:

EXPLORING BEAUFORT WEST THROUGH THE CENTRAL KAROO INREACH PROGRAMME

Nkosinathi Emmanuel Xego

On 20 September last year, Dr Reno Morar, Ms Marilize Botha, Mr Kavir Dullabh and I embarked on a three-day journey to Beaufort West as part of the Central Karoo InReach Programme. It was a wonderful experience filled with great memories and learning opportunities.

The programme's essence is serving rural communities – a concept that captivates and resonates with me. An opportunity to interact with peers from other universities was also a special experience: one in which we compared notes on our academics and challenges.

While initially hesitant, I quickly became immersed in the experience, enjoying laughter and the positive spirit fostered by Dr Morar's hospitality and support. The scenery was beautiful and therapeutic, and we made friends from both Stellenbosch University (SU) and University of the Western Cape (UWC).

This programme is a golden opportunity to give back while learning. It showcases the power of coming together with one common goal – and I will be back to do it again.

My trip highlights

- Working with SU fifth-year students – their guidance and supervision was so valuable.
- Learning from my older peers – their confidence while performing clinical activities and dentistry, with minimal professorial assistance, was an eye-opener.
- Ward rounds and interesting teaching cases.
- Pop quizzes on clinical reasoning, pathology, investigations and patient management.

Kavir Dullabh

It was a privilege to be part of this collaborative effort with my colleagues and Dr Morar – a programme that brings together partners from various universities, the public sector, NGOs and private companies to deliver cataract surgeries and primary dental care to patients in the region.

My first day involved collaborating with UWC final-year dentistry students, extracting teeth and giving injections under supervision. This hands-on experience was both challenging and rewarding, offering a glimpse into the world of another healthcare profession.

My trip highlights

- Working with SU third-year medical students, completing rounds and providing our case inputs – this was where theory finally met practice and took shape within the context of real patients.
- Sharing our Mandela University programme experience with SU students – a valuable opportunity to gauge their skillsets and foster camaraderie and heartwarming friendships.

A motto that was instilled into us from the very first day of this programme was, "Serve as you learn". I resonated deeply with this motto, as it encapsulated the essence of our journey as aspiring Mandela Doctors, to approach every step of our training with humility, dedication, and a commitment to serve.

This experience has profoundly shaped my perspective on healthcare and reinforced my passion for the profession.

Marilize Botha

You cannot fully appreciate the work of another healthcare professional without spending a day in their shoes.

This experience not only broadened my understanding of other disciplines but also offered new perspectives through the experiences of my peers.

One of our core competencies as aspiring healthcare professionals is the ability to collaborate with others to provide holistic patient care. What better way to achieve this than by assisting students from different health science departments and universities in their respective fields of expertise?

My trip highlights

- A problem shared is a problem halved – interacting with SU and UWC medical and dental students respectively showed me that my own doubts and concerns are common along this educational journey.
- Common goals – we agreed that we want to become competent, compassionate professionals.
- Begin with listening – although we aren't yet licensed doctors, this programme taught me the invaluable lesson that being a caring doctor begins with listening to your patient; being heard is as vital as the diagnosis and treatment.

Helping patients doesn't always require grand gestures or a full qualification. Prevention often outweighs cure, and our role, at this stage, enables us to engage with and educate patients, sharing valuable knowledge.

In doing so, we can make a meaningful impact even before we're certified to treat them directly.

By Mr Luntu Dayimani, Medical School Society: Chairperson and Mr Kavir Dullabh, Deputy President of the Medical School Society

The Nelson Mandela University Medical Society continues to make impactful strides in representing and supporting medical students while fostering meaningful connections with the surrounding community.

Founded and led entirely by students, the Society embodies a vision of holistic growth—encompassing academic, professional, and personal development—as members journey toward becoming the iconic “Mandela Doctors.”

Launch Event at Missionvale Campus

On 19 March 2024, our memorable launch event at the Missionvale Campus Student Life Centre was facilitated by Mr Yanga Lusasa from the Student Development Office and featured Dr Yoshna Kooverjee, Senior Lecturer at the Medical School, as guest speaker.

This health awareness event was conducted in a podcast-style format, offering an engaging Q&A session on healthcare topics.



Educational Outreach at Ndzondelelo High School

In October 2024, the Medical Society’s executive committee and members visited Ndzondelelo High School to deliver an educational talk to its learners. This session addressed critical topics such as consent, sexually transmitted infections, sexual protection, family planning, and drug abuse.

By creating a safe, open environment, the Society empowered learners to ask questions, engage in meaningful discussions, and gain accurate, reliable information essential for making informed choices.

Society highlights

- Interactive Podcast Event (19 April 2024) at Missionvale Campus, with Dr Yoshna Kooverjee
- World Anatomy Day: the Society played a pivotal role in showcasing the fascinating field of anatomy

A legacy of service and empowerment

The Nelson Mandela University Medical Society is more than a platform for medical students; it is a catalyst for change within the University and the broader community.

Through its various projects and initiatives, the Society strives to nurture future medical professionals while making a tangible difference in the lives of others.

The journey to becoming a “Mandela Doctor” is not only about academic excellence but also about embodying the values of compassion, empowerment, and service—values that resonate at the heart of Nelson Mandela University.

BY MR JOASTIN NAIDOO

Each year at the Medical School, the completion of a successful dissection programme is marked with a commemoration ceremony for our students to express gratitude to the body donors for their altruism.

The ceremony was held on 25 November 2024, and provided a space for students to reflect on their journey in the dissection hall.

Student speakers Sonum Sahadeo, Ndivhuwo Malima and Angelique Cohen noted the change from their initial reactions when interfacing with their cadavers to the confidence they found in their curiosity about the structure of the human body.

A common theme was the support from dissection group members, which minimised nervousness and benefited learning activities. Ms Cohen also stated that working with their team's cadaver gave her and her colleagues a broader picture of what it means to be a healthcare professional.

The cadaver is usually seen as the 'first patient' in a medical student's career, and aside from the knowledge gained, it is encouraging to see that students have also garnered soft skills during the dissection process.

Ms Mahlatse Mahasha, Lecturer in Human Anatomy, gave the Commemoration Address, in which she thanked the class for the high level of ethical practice that they exhibited throughout the year when working with cadaveric material, and for the respect given to the donors, and by extension their family, by recognising the intrinsic value that their cadavers hold.



4TH YEAR OATH TAKING CEREMONY:

MEMORABLE MOMENT: On 28 January 2025, the Medical School proudly hosted the MBChB IV students at their Oath Taking Ceremony, a significant milestone in their medical journey. This ceremony marked the transition of our future doctors into the clinical phase of their training, symbolising their deepening commitment to ethical medical practice and patient care. As they recited the Hippocratic Oath, these future doctors pledged themselves in service to society, embracing the core values of integrity, professionalism, care, compassion, and ethical conduct. Their dedication serves as a testament to the high standards of our medical community, reinforcing the principles that will guide them throughout their careers.



FUNDING

THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS

We are deeply grateful to our donors for their contributions. Your kindness and support have made a significant impact on the lives of students, and we are truly appreciative of your selfless act. Thank you for making a difference.

Your contributions bring hope and relief, and we are honoured to have such compassionate individuals as part of our network.

With sincere gratitude.

The Nelson Mandela University Medical School

CHAN SOON-SHIONG FAMILY FOUNDATION AND THE SOUTH AFRICAN MEDICAL RESEARCH COUNCIL (SAMRC)

A heartfelt thank you to the Chan Soon-Shiong Family Foundation and the South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC) for their generous scholarships dedicated to supporting medical students at Nelson Mandela University. These scholarships play a vital role in alleviating the financial burden on our students, enabling them to focus fully on their academic journey and excel throughout their medical studies. Your support not only empowers these future healthcare professionals but also contributes to building a healthier and stronger society.

GIFT OF THE GIVERS

Thank you to Gift of the Givers for generously donating grocery parcels to support our medical students, helping to ensure that they have access to nutritious meals essential for success in their studies.



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>.

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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

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