

DOCTORS WITH PURPOSE

UNMASKED

Through the photographer's lens

Doctors with purpose unmasked | Through the photographer's lens.

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DISCOVERY FOUNDATION AWARDS
2021



ABOUT THE DISCOVERY FOUNDATION

Set up in 2006, the Discovery Foundation is an independent trust that aims to distribute R300 million in grants, over 20 years, towards the education and training of 500 healthcare specialists.

The Discovery Foundation Awards honour and reward excellence in our country's healthcare sector. Award recipients receive grants in the form of scholarships, bursaries, research fellowships, and support for teaching and research institutions.

By supporting the training of specialists for rural areas, and the development of academic medicine and research centres, the Discovery Foundation hopes to increase the number of specialists available to adequately meet the country's healthcare needs.

DISCOVERY FOUNDATION AWARDS
2021



DR VINCENT MAPHAI

Chair of the Discovery Foundation

Foreword

When I look back at the Discovery Foundation recipients of the past two years, and speculate about the future, I continue to be inspired by the commitment of medical professionals to their noble profession. The COVID-19 pandemic gave our doctors another reason to demonstrate their mettle, in a country that continues to face a shortage of healthcare workers. It reminds me of several health crises from which our country has emerged in recent decades. Yet, it is evident that we have slowly but surely created a pipeline of dedicated doctors who are determined to make a mark in our country.

What is also clear is that the future of healthcare is reliant on partnerships between the public, private and non-governmental sectors. Similar relationships are critical to achieving universal access to quality healthcare – a basic human right towards which we must aspire relentlessly. This is what the Discovery Foundation aims to achieve, by supporting the United Nations 2030 sustainability goal of bringing healthcare to as many people as possible.

The Foundation appreciates that this is not a simple exercise. Yet, data shows that improvement and progress is possible.

We have invested nearly R300 million in grants to support academic medicine through research, development and the training of nearly 500 (predominantly black and female) medical specialists in South Africa in the public sector.

These grants include scholarships, bursaries, research fellowships and support for teaching and research institutions to strengthen the country's healthcare workforce.

I am proud of the contribution that the Foundation has made towards this aim.

For example, Dr Sumy Thomas, who is on a secondment to Harvard Medical School, is undertaking research on the endocrine system of patients affected by HIV. The findings will be immensely invaluable to the 7.7 million South Africans on antiretroviral treatment. Sumy is a recipient of the Discovery Foundation MGH Fellowship Award for 2020/21 and will use her fellowship to focus on internal medicine in the public sector.

Every year, since 2013, a South African doctor working in the public sector is chosen for a year-long fellowship at Massachusetts General Hospital, the largest teaching hospital of Harvard Medical School based in Boston in the United States. It is an opportunity of a lifetime for a doctor to learn from the world's top medical specialists and an opportunity to conduct cutting-edge clinical research.

Finally, Discovery Foundation Awards recipients are expected to service the public sector for at least two years after completing their training. It is noteworthy that more than 60 percent of our alumni continue working in the public sector even after their contractual requirement has lapsed. Many serve as academics, training new specialists. Long may they continue. I hope you enjoy reading their stories.

Dr Maphai

DISCOVERY FOUNDATION AWARDS
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RUTH LEWIN

Discovery's Head of
Corporate Sustainability

Executive summary



When you read about the doctors featured in this book, I would appreciate you considering the context in which they have thrived, two years into a global pandemic. Many have lost loved ones and sacrificed their families while working long hours, yet maintaining their rigorous academic research programme. I hope we were able to capture their tenacity with the emotive content and photography that aims to highlight just how valuable their contribution to South African society is – and will be – in the future.

We know that the COVID-19 pandemic has brought into stark reality the critical shortage of healthcare professionals in South Africa's public health sector. One of the most significant insights from this unexpected event was exposing and shining a light on healthcare systems globally. For South Africa, it was an indicator of our healthcare capabilities and an unveiling of what works, and what needs to work better.

But it also highlighted the impact of the work that is pushing us towards positive change.

I am pleased to see the long-term impact of the Discovery Foundation. With nearly 500 alumni to date, the Foundation fellows continue to fly the flag high. For example, Professor Ncoza Dlova is the first black female full professor at the University of KwaZulu-Natal's medical school in 71 years, while Professor Mushi Matjila is the head of the University of Cape Town's Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology. Professor Liesl Zühlke, a paediatric cardiologist and African leader in cardiovascular medicine, has been appointed the South African Medical Research Council Vice President, while Professor Lionel Green-Thompson is the Dean of the University of Cape Town (UCT) Medical School. Professor Tracey Naledi is the Deputy Dean of the Health Services Faculty of Health Sciences at UCT, and the Dean and Head of The School of Clinical Medicine at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN).

Several alumni are board members of the Academy of Science of South Africa, which honours and recognises the country's most outstanding and celebrated scholars. These include Professor Ntobeko Ntusi, cardiologist, professor of medicine and the Chair and Head of Medicine at UCT;

Professor Mosa Moshabela, associate professor and acting Deputy Vice Chancellor of Research and Innovation at UKZN and Professor Salome Maswime, clinician, obstetrician and gynaecologist and Global Surgery lead at UCT. I could go on. It is important to note that the impact of these doctors' work is changing the landscape of our country's healthcare system for the better.

Through the Foundation, we have committed ourselves to the World Health Organization's Sustainable Development Goals and the South African government's National Development Plan that aims to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality and unemployment by 2030.

Thus, in our selection process of grants and awardees, we have considered an important aspect of the long-term vision by supporting postgraduates (especially PhD or doctoral support) study. One of the National Development Plan's enabling milestones is to ensure that skilled, technical, professional and managerial posts better reflect the country's racial, gender and disability makeup.

The awards highlighted in this book went to incredibly deserving healthcare professionals and institutions who have continued their ground-breaking work despite the challenges and setbacks of the past few years.

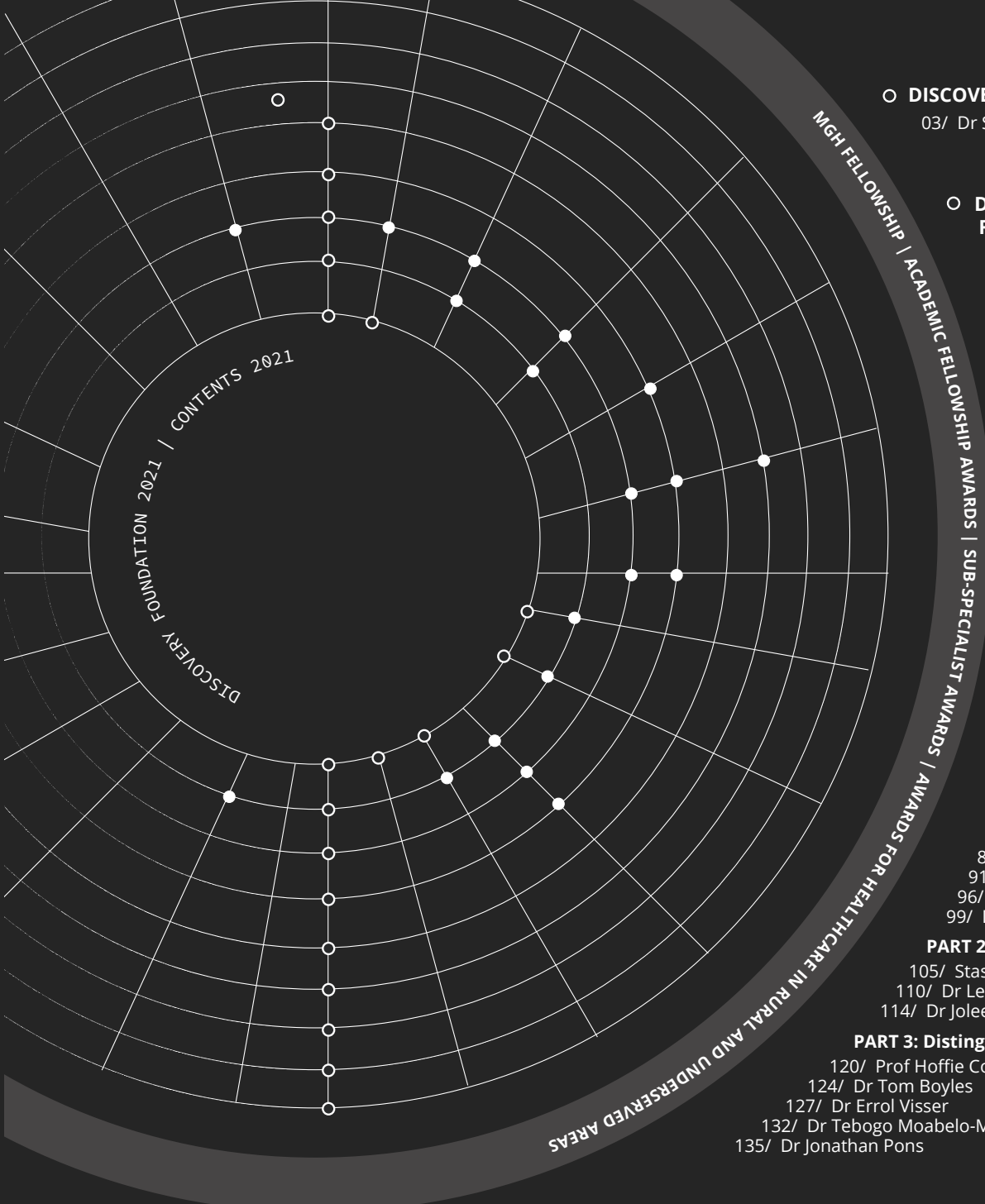
The Discovery Foundation shares the vision of an ideal landscape of medical professionals in South Africa that should have enough specialists for the country's population and features a demographic that is representative of the country across race and gender. Therefore, a big focus for us is the feminisation of the specialist sector, and it is an aim we are working towards with rigour.

In the pages of this book, you will meet about 70 of the country's future leaders in healthcare. I hope you will be inspired by their journey. Huge congratulations to our esteemed recipients.

Ruth

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MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL HOSPITAL
FELLOWSHIP 2021

MASSACHUSETTS
**GENERAL
HOSPITAL
FELLOWSHIP**



Dr SUMY THOMAS

{MGH Award 2020/2021}

Deciphering the human
puzzle from the inside out

"Quite early on I was exposed to how difficult life can be for people starting out in South Africa, but how education can provide an equal opportunity," says Dr Teresa Sumy Thomas.

As the 2020 and 2021 recipient of the prestigious Discovery Foundation MGH Fellowship, Dr Thomas will spend a year-long medical residency at Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) in Boston, US. MGH is a clinical service and biomedical research facility and the largest teaching hospital of Harvard Medical School.

She will receive supervision from leading experts and gain exposure to the hospital's research environment.

LOOKING FOR THE ANSWERS TO COMPLICATED CONDITIONS

Dr Thomas will be placed at the MGH metabolism unit in the division of endocrinology to figure out a complicated condition that has come up in her recent work. She makes the science sound simple, explaining that her research will explore how HIV and antiretroviral (ARV) medicine affect the endocrine system.

"This will address a need in the population of South Africa. We have an estimated 7.7 million people living with HIV – the largest pandemic in the world. While ARVs have helped give longevity to patients in the past decade, we are now seeing a larger number of patients at risk for cardiometabolic disease, including dysglycaemia (fluctuating blood glucose levels) and fatty liver disease, which could be a result of the virus itself or from ARV therapy. This area needs to be explored further," she says.



The main aspect of Dr Thomas' research is to study the reasons that ARV medicine and viruses promote glucose, cholesterol and hypertension abnormalities in patients. "It's a fairly new area of research, but I hope that it will allow us to work out how to target the right medicine for the right people," she says.

BRINGING IT BACK HOME

As an endocrinologist, a much-needed specialty in the country, Dr Thomas will be able to support patients in the public sector. "I can bring this knowledge back to South Africa to enhance the care of patients and to continue research in this field. By being attuned to the needs of our population, I hope to generate relevant research and be involved in the training of specialists in years to come."

Dr Thomas adds that the fellowship opportunity is unparalleled in the medical field. "I realised that there was a knowledge gap, and it just so happened that Prof Steven Grinspoon, the Boston supervisor, was an organic fit."



"And, as a lived experience, working abroad and seeing medicine in a different setting will be life-changing."

Learn more about this study and how Dr Thomas sees this opportunity.



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DISCOVERY FOUNDATION

ACADEMIC

FELLOWSHIP

AWARDS



This award promotes research-focused training in academic medicine and aims to develop more clinician scientists to benefit healthcare in South Africa. It may also contribute towards funding a fellowship in clinical medicine.

ACADEMIC FELLOWSHIP
AWARDS 2021



Dr

SIKHUMBULO

MBATHA

{Academic Fellowship Awards}

The power of saving one

Visiting his beloved, seriously ill maternal grandfather in a rural KwaZulu-Natal coastal hospital convinced Dr Sikhumbulo Mbatha, then 11, to become a doctor.

"THAT'S PROBABLY WHEN I STARTED THINKING THAT I SHOULD BE ABLE TO SAVE PEOPLE," HE RECALLS.

Dr Mbatha specialised in general surgery and later sub-specialised in surgical gastroenterology.





DIRE NEED FOR SURGICAL SKILLS

While operating, he was struck by how many patients had late-stage cancer, some of them only just in time for surgical intervention.

"I get frustrated – sometimes catching it just two months earlier could have saved them," he says.

His ultimate goal is to identify the molecular abnormalities that can be used to develop targeted therapy agents.

This surgeon-handyman, who loves to do pen and ink sketches in his spare time, has finally secured the tools and funding to begin the broad brushstrokes in the finer diagnosis and treatment of these ubiquitous diseases. Genomic analysis is expensive, and his Discovery Foundation Academic Fellowship Award gives him the kickstart he needs.



*Keep reading for more on this
innovative research.*

DR ZOZO NENE

{Academic Fellowship Awards}

Combating the stigma of infertility

Being infertile carries crushing stigma in some cultures, especially for women. Countering this, while measuring the extent of infertility and enhancing knowledge of its varied diagnoses and treatment, is an abiding passion for obstetrician and reproductive medicine sub-specialist, Dr Zozo Nene.

WOMEN BEAR THE STIGMA OF INFERTILITY

Dr Nene saw glaring areas of healthcare neglect during her training, including countless women dealing with infertility and depression who'd suffered stigma, some with estranged husbands and some living as semi-social outcasts.

"There are not enough services or appropriate professional knowledge and treatment," she says.



IMPROVING ACCESS TO FERTILITY CARE THROUGH TRAINING

With her Discovery Foundation Academic Fellowship, Dr Nene will tackle a PhD focusing on the scarcity of local infertility data by quantifying the extent of the problem and its multiple causes. “It’s also about creating world-class service,” she concludes.



*Find out more about Dr Nene's
approach to infertility.*



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DR TUMELO SATEKGE

{Academic Fellowship Awards}

“I’m not here by mistake” – Dr Tumelo Satekge investigates rare diseases in children

THE DEATH OF A CHILD IGNITES DR SATEKGE’S CAREER

The defining moment in Dr Satekge’s choice of research path came in 2018.

A diagnosis of a rare genetic disease – mevalonic aciduria, typified by failure to thrive, recurrent inflammatory attacks and liver failure – was confirmed far too late and the child died. “That’s when I realised there is a lack of awareness of rare genetic diseases and became determined to help rectify this,” he says.

Early detection and intervention could save lives.

Dr Satekge took the most pragmatic step he could think of: identifying the most common inherited metabolic diseases in South African children. He received a 2021 Discovery Foundation Academic Fellowship for his highly specialised research on improving the screening, diagnosis and clinical outcomes of infants born with galactosaemia, which affects the child’s ability to metabolise the sugar galactose found in milk, in South Africa.

DISCOVERY SUPPORTS RESEARCH IN A RARE, SPECIALISED FIELD

“To have this opportunity to make a difference in this field is absolutely remarkable.”



*Find out how Dr Satekge became the only
chemical pathologist in Limpopo.*





DR FIKILE MABENA

{Academic Fellowship Awards}

Inspired by her gifts to give back

After qualifying as a medical doctor at the University of Pretoria, Dr Mabena joined the 1 Military Hospital in Pretoria and was deployed on a peacekeeping mission to Burundi. Afterwards, she worked for several paediatric NGOs focussing on HIV and palliative care, and did her paediatric registrar training at Chris Hani Baragwanath Academic Hospital.

THE JOURNEY TO PAEDIATRIC INFECTIOUS DISEASES

"I think the combination of paediatrics and HIV steered me towards infectious diseases, which is why my PhD is around the epidemiology of community and hospital-acquired invasive infection in infants, from birth to three months old," she says.

It is for this important research that Dr Mabena has received a 2021 Discovery Foundation Academic Fellowship Award.

**“I’VE BEEN GIVEN AN OPPORTUNITY
TO GIVE BACK”**

She explains her passion for public health:
“I feel like I’ve been given an opportunity to
be educated so I can return and give back.
It sounds clichéd, but I’m doing exactly what
I went to school to do. It’s satisfying and very
fulfilling.”



*Learn more about Dr Mabena,
her experience in Burundi and more.*





DR LIESL DE WAARD

{Academic Fellowship Awards}

A website and app dedicated to C-section training is Dr Liesl de Waard's goal

In a perfect world, obstetrician and gynaecologist Dr Liesl de Waard would apply easy-to-use technology and simulation programs to teach medical students and aspirant trainers how to perform safe Caesarean sections.

However, in a country with high numbers of necessary C-sections, hospitals have little or no option but to let junior doctors conduct them, too often with little supervision.

"IN MY CAREER I'VE OFTEN THOUGHT, IF ONLY I'D KNOWN THIS FROM THE START!"

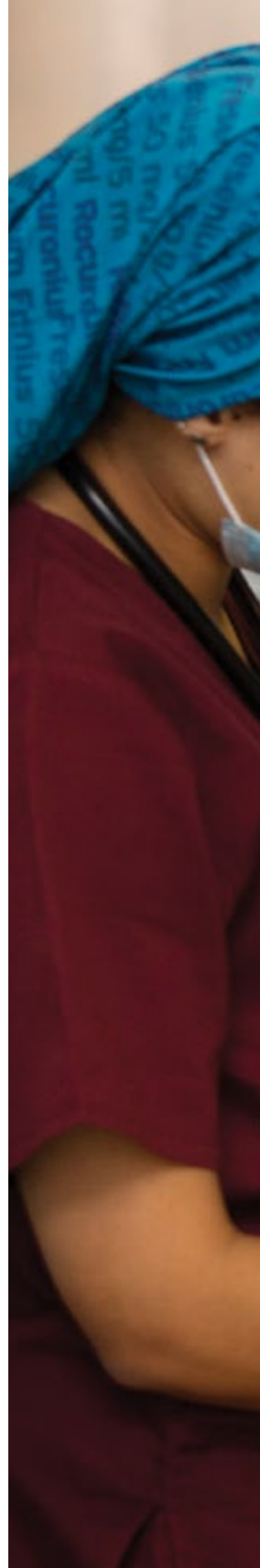
Her Discovery Foundation Academic Fellowship Award will cover two years of developing and implementing a training programme at Tygerberg Hospital, using researched educational strategies, online learning, simulation and hands-on procedures.

GRANT ALLOWS DEDICATED RESEARCH

“This grant will give me more time, so I can get on with software development. I hope to create a website and mobile application dedicated to C-section teaching,” she enthuses.



*Find out how she has brought
international knowledge home.*







DR MERYL OYOMNO

{Academic Fellowship Awards}

Halting cancer's genetic legacy

What if one could stop colon cancer in the embryo? This is the crux of Dr Meryl Oyomno's cutting-edge research for which she has received a 2021 Discovery Foundation Academic Fellowship Award.

The Kenyan-born colorectal surgeon explains that genetic testing of embryos of parents with genetic predisposition to colon cancer carries prospects for elimination of rogue genes – and the hope of halting generations of suffering and grief.

In 2017, she spent time at Oxford University and St Mark's Hospital in London, which has the biggest polyposis registry in the world. The experience is one of the things that inspired her to begin molecular profiling of colorectal cancer in young black South African patients.

IN PURSUIT OF NEW CANCER DATA

"I wondered, at a genetic level, what mutations did they have that caused the cancer? It may not be polyps but something else. This is what my research is about," she explains.



“DON'T LET GENDER BE A LIMITATION”

Her advice to young women in a male-dominated field? “Don’t let your gender be a limitation and don’t use it as an excuse. Work hard, be socially responsible, humbly pursue God’s purpose for your life and have empathy for those around you. Look at the needs in your society and how you can help solve them.”



Keep reading about Dr Oyomno's ground-breaking research.

DR

T SHEGOFATSO

MABELANE

{Academic Fellowship Awards}

The blessings of mentorship
and hard work

Author, innovator, teacher and self-confessed adrenalin junkie, Dr Tshegofatso Mabelane considers herself blessed – which also happens to be the English translation of her first name.

HEAD WOUND SPARKS CHILDHOOD AMBITION

Her gratitude for her blessings, and current enlivening track in allergology and family medicine, comes from triumphing over several struggles – and being inspired by the lifestyle and choices of a key mentor. Her professional direction was firmly established at six years old when she gashed her head on a glass table while being chased by her brother. The casualty matron and staff who stitched up her head wound made an indelible impression.

“They were all so kind, explaining exactly what was going to happen. It was such a friendly environment. I felt safe. That’s when I knew this is what I want to do. I still have that scar on my forehead to remind me!” Dr Mabelane laughs.



NEAR-TRAGEDY REDIRECTS CAREER

Dr Mabelane's shift to allergology was inspired by her mother's violent allergic reaction to the contrast medium used in a diagnostic CT scan. Her mother recovered, and the experience inspired Dr Mabelane to write a book called *When Encouragement Seems Far Away*.

That incident aroused her intense curiosity about allergies, further widening her academic and clinical horizons. She moved to Cape Town to do her MPhil in Allergology, which she completed in 2018 through an initial Discovery Foundation Sub-specialist Award. She has now secured a Discovery Foundation Academic Fellowship to further her PhD research in understanding asthma in people with HIV.



Find out how Dr Mabelane has distilled her life experiences into a tonic.



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DISCOVERY FOUNDATION SUB-SPECIALIST AWARDS

A woman with dark hair is lying on a table in a medical setting, possibly for an ultrasound. She is wearing a light blue shirt. In the foreground, there is a control panel with a keyboard and various buttons. The background is slightly blurred, showing a white wall and a red chair.



DR PHELISA SOGAYISE

{Sub-specialist Awards}

Planting the seeds to improve resources and access

There might seem to be a world of difference between digging up potatoes for waiting customers in your mother's backyard in Libode, Eastern Cape, and advocating for greater awareness of hypertension and kidney disease across the nation.

Yet both involve hard work, business acumen and reassuring people that there are significant benefits to waiting patiently for limited resources. Plus, both involve planting the seeds to improve resources and access.

That sums up nephrology fellow Dr Phelisa Sogayise's journey from rural Eastern Cape to Cape Town, where she's now a physician. The daughter of an insurance broker father and teacher mother, Dr Sogayise is passionate about access to healthcare and reducing the nation's burden of hypertension and kidney disease.

"Growing up in Libode as the sixth of seven children, I was fascinated by how far we had to travel to get to any health clinic or doctor," she says. "It was like a day trip, and if you couldn't see the doctor, you had to come back the next day and queue forever. It was hard. So, I wanted to help and give people easy access to a doctor who they know."

DR PHELISA SOGAYISE



TACKLING SOUTH AFRICA'S SILENT KILLER

Why nephrology? Dr Sogayise doesn't hesitate in her answer. "There are millions of South Africans with hypertension who are often diagnosed late or are left untreated, and less than 50% of those treated have controlled blood pressure," she explains. "Unfortunately, hypertension is a silent killer with no real symptoms, and some people already have complications at diagnosis, kidney failure being one of them."



*Find out how she plans to tackle
the silent killer.*



DISCOVERY FOUNDATION AWARDS
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DR LINDA TANGAYI

{Sub-specialist Awards}

Passionately filling maternal care gaps

Obstetrician Dr Linda Tangayi's joy upon hearing that Discovery Foundation was to fund her ongoing maternal foetal medicine sub-specialisation was short-lived. Her delighted parents revelled in the news – only to die from sudden COVID-19 related symptoms 72 hours later.

OVERWORKED IS THE NEW NORMAL

A busy obstetrician and gynaecologist at the Dora Nginza Tertiary Hospital, Dr Tangayi helps with more complex cases and often oversees an overloaded Caesarean section slate in between her studies.

"I've become used to having 'intolerable' days. Even with the support of the staff and registrars, who make a big difference doing most calls, we're still overworked. But it's our normal," she laughs.

"BECOMING A DOCTOR WAS MY MOTHER'S DREAM"

She said she would have studied for a MBChB had she not married so young," she shares. "My dad was very cool. He said, 'Just do the BSc and then medicine – no problem'. My parents were also sponsoring my siblings, but my mum said, 'Ayi! Let us worry about the finances'."



YAWNING SKILLS GAP IN MATERNAL FOETAL MEDICINE

Dr Tangayi's interest in maternal foetal medicine began while rotating through sub-specialties at Inkosi Albert Luthuli Central Hospital, in KwaZulu-Natal.

She recognised a yawning gap in public sector foetal maternal medicine in the Eastern Cape where she'll soon be the only one in her field. She'll handle really complex pregnancies, birth complications and rare maternal medical conditions.



What gives her the most pleasure in her profession?

Keep reading to find out.

DR

AKHONA

KAMA

{Sub-specialist Awards}

Bringing relief to Eastern Cape women

Seeing her sick grandmother's beaming expression during a medical student ward round in her fourth year of medicine at Nelson Mandela Academic Hospital in Mthatha made an indelible impression on obstetrician and gynaecologist, Dr Akhona Kama.

INSPIRED BY COMMUNITY

It was during her community service year that she became interested in obstetrics. "There was something about dealing with both the mother and the child that attracted me," she adds.

THE EASTERN CAPE TO HAVE ITS FIRST UROGYNAECOLOGIST IN 2023

Urogynaecology is a specialised field of obstetrics and gynaecology that focuses on female pelvic medicine and reconstructive surgery. Pelvic floor conditions such as a weak bladder are often neglected or overlooked, and too many women live with avoidable issues that can cause isolation and social stigma.

Once Dr Kama completes her urogynaecology sub-specialty in Cape Town in 2023, she'll almost certainly be the only qualified urogynaecologist in the Eastern Cape.



YOU'RE NEVER TOO SMART TO LEARN MORE

Dr Kama lives with her two children, 12-year-old Lukhonathi and 8-year-old Sakhile, in Thornton, Cape Town. She describes her children as “understanding and flexible”.

“My daughter told me that if this is my dream, I should do it,” she shares.



*Read about what she learnt
from her parents.*





DR HAMIDA VAN STAADEN

{Sub-specialist Awards}

Caring for children with cancer in the Eastern Cape

Raised and inspired by grounded, pragmatic matriarchs and mentors in a multi-cultural rural upbringing turned Dr Hamida van Staaden into an accomplished paediatrician.

Stemming from a passion for patient wellbeing, she developed an unwavering tenacity and sturdy mindset, blended with the compassion required for paediatric oncology. Dr van Staaden received a 2021 Discovery Foundation Award to sub-specialise in this field, which involves caring for young children with cancer and their careworn mothers.

DR VAN STAADEN'S MULTI-CULTURAL UPBRINGING

Her early mentors were her mother, Saleema, and grandmother, Annie van Staaden. Together, they oversaw her schooling and adaptation to a predominantly isiXhosa-speaking primary school in Qumbu, and later a mostly Afrikaans-speaking school in Ugie, both in the rural Eastern Cape.

AN INEVITABLE INTEREST IN CHILD MEDICINE

She befriended paediatric registrar, Dr Leann Munian, the third in an influential line of “strong, gentle women” who, like her mother and grandmother, “was totally calm in any crisis”. This new friendship drove her further towards paediatric medicine.



JOY IN SEEING CHILDREN BOUNCE BACK

“I found something special in doing the right thing at the right time and seeing children bounce back – and they’re so resilient, these little ones,” Dr van Staaden says. “The other benefit was teaching the patient’s mother, and by extension, entire communities, about child-care.”

DRIVING THE PAEDIATRIC ONCOLOGY SERVICE AT HOME

After several anxious months without finding a paediatric oncology sub-speciality training post, one became available at Frere Hospital, the facility where she was born.

Her proficiency in isiXhosa and isiZulu is a huge blessing in consulting with her patients today, she adds.



*Her chief ambition?
Keep reading to find out.*

DISCOVERY FOUNDATION AWARDS
2021

**DISCOVERY
FOUNDATION
AWARDS FOR
HEALTHCARE
IN RURAL AND
UNDERSERVED
AREAS**



Part 1: Individual Awards

Part 2: Institutional Awards

Part 3: Distinguished Visitor Award

DISCOVERY FOUNDATION AWARDS
2021

Part 1:

DISCOVERY FOUNDATION INDIVIDUAL AWARDS

This award supports the training and development of specialists for rural and underserved areas, including MMed registrars and senior medical doctors. The aim is to bring more medical expertise to hospitals in under-resourced areas in South Africa.



Dr FUNEKA PANDELANI

{Rural Individual Awards}

A long hike to healing

A cold, 60 km mountainous walk from Maseru to the remote Mokhotlong district in Lesotho to visit her maternal grandparents when she was only six years old remains an unforgettable experience for third-year family medicine registrar, Dr Funeka Pandelani.

Dr Pandelani says seeing her domestic worker mother and late truck driver father, Themba, struggle financially influenced her profoundly.

"They both came from impoverished backgrounds, and I saw people all around me ignoring health issues because they had to constantly chase money," she says. "They had to walk long distances to get to a clinic. Often they wouldn't get there in time and died of treatable things like diarrhoea and pneumonia."

"IT'S A WONDERFUL FEELING - HELPING PATIENTS"

Today the most pleasurable aspect of her job is seeing a formerly ill patient unrecognisably healthy and being discharged to make an impact in their community.

*"It's a wonderful feeling
- helping patients"*

MITIGATING CHRONIC PAIN FOR PATIENTS

Dr Pandelani is researching the impact of chronic pain on the quality of life of patients at the Soshanguve Community Health Centre in the Tshwane District.



There's more to this story. Find out where she is now and how her journey has touched lives.





Dr MEGHAN VAN DER LINDE-BROWN

{Rural Individual Awards}

How do citizens of Oudtshoorn view mental health?
Dr Meghan van der Linde investigates

Third-year family medicine registrar, Dr Meghan van der Linde-Brown, wants to understand why mental health is such a low priority in rural healthcare settings. She asks, “Is it a lack of time, knowledge, skills or patience?”

Her curiosity prompted her to successfully apply for a Discovery Foundation Rural Individual Award to investigate how healthcare workers and patients in Oudtshoorn view mental healthcare.

“There seems to be an aversion to mental health in general, with stigma playing a big part.”

INSPIRED TO HEAL

“At school I loved accounting, but I never really saw the corporate picture. Then, whenever I or a family member visited the doctor for an illness, I was inspired,” she says.

“THE JOURNEY WITH THE FAMILY IS MUCH MORE FULFILLING”

“You end up being the one who stitches up the person whose child you deliver the following week, before he brings that same child in five years later to have their appendix removed. The journey with the family is much more fulfilling,” she laughs.

DISCOVERY FOUNDATION ALUMNUS NOW HER SUPERVISOR

Two colleagues stand out in influencing and affirming her career choices. First Dr Braam Muller, who encouraged her to do a diploma in family medicine. The second, family medicine physician Professor Louis Jenkins from George, who is now her research supervisor. “He’s an amazing person, he helped me really appreciate the diversity of it.”



**Want to know the most
rewarding aspect of her job?**

Keep reading to find out.







Dr PFUNZO MACHIMANA

{Rural Individual Awards}

Getting to the heart of healthcare-seeking behaviour

Seeing how patient behaviours and lifestyles result in illness, and being schooled in a preventative approach, has turned family medicine registrar Dr Pfunzo Machimana into a self-confessed "closet social worker".

Dr Machimana spends most of her time dealing with preventable illnesses, nevermind seeing the same people return to casualty time and again with bullet or stab wounds.

"Can't we just tell people that it's better to die from non-self-inflicted causes? I think I'm a closet social worker," she says with a wry chuckle.

CUBAN TRAINING A HUGE INFLUENCE

A large part of her approach to medicine was instilled during her MBChB training in Cuba where primary healthcare is the chief focus – something South Africa has been struggling to adapt to at great cost over several decades.



LIVING TO HEAL AND EDUCATE

“Just a little exploration of what’s happening in their lives can reveal a wealth of information and help you to single out stressors,” she says.

With her Discovery Foundation Rural Individual Award, Dr Machimana is auditing the **Road to Health** booklet to explore prevention and healthcare initiatives.



Learn more about where she’s been
and how this project is progressing.

Dr ANDREW WILKINS

{Rural Individual Awards}


Easing the trauma of childbirth
for women in rural settings

Dr Wilkins is a second-year family medicine registrar attached to the Walter Sisulu University in Mthatha.

RESEARCH FOR WOMEN AND CHILDBIRTH

His Discovery Foundation-funded research focuses on making childbirth safer for rural women – a practice encouraged by the World Health Organization.

Dr Wilkins' research hopes to contribute to adaptation, improved instrument skills and better outcomes for complicated vertical deliveries.



"Not a day goes by when I haven't enjoyed the challenges, even in the hardships. We're a team and can see the tangible difference we make in these rural settings."

“If we can avoid that first C-section, it will lessen the likelihood of the next one. If we can show that Madwaleni Hospital is doing well, we could create a training programme for other facilities when instrumental deliveries are indicated and do more of these safely,” he says.



**Find out more about Dr Wilkins'
dedication to rural healthcare.**





Dr SIOBHAN BOOYSEN

{Rural Individual Awards}

Restoring mental health is a privilege


Restoring a sound state of mind is the greatest gift you can give someone. That's the belief and constant motivation for second-year Gqeberha psychiatry registrar, Dr Siobhan Booyesen, a passionate advocate for mental health in the under-resourced Eastern Cape.

"There's a high prevalence of mental health issues here," she says. "It's often a last priority and underappreciated."

DISCOVERY FOUNDATION ALUMNUS BECOMES HER MENTOR

Dr Booyesen was inspired by her mentor, consultant psychiatrist and supervisor, Professor Christoffel Grobler, the Head of the Clinical Unit at Elizabeth Donkin Hospital and Associate Professor at Walter Sisulu University. Prof Grobler received a Discovery Foundation Rural Distinguished Visitor Award in 2014 to provide psychiatric outreach services to patients in Graaff-Reinet and Somerset East.





Her Discovery Foundation Rural Individual Award will enable her research on clozapine, a powerful anti-psychotic medicine that is considered the gold standard for treatment-resistant psychosis.

A large number of admissions to her hospital are drug related, mostly cannabis and tik abuse. The study will also look at possible links between drug use and treatment-resistant psychosis.

"EVERY DAY FEELS LIKE A FIGHT FOR YOUR PATIENTS' RIGHTS."



*Read more about
Dr Booyen's work.*

Dr ABONGILE SUKWANA

{Rural Individual Awards}

Why do patients in Mthatha cancel elective surgeries?
Dr Abongile Sukwana investigates

Turning the turmoil of a family tragedy into positive energy that drives his academic and clinical ambition was a turning point for Tsomo-born aspiring anaesthetologist, Dr Abongile Sukwana

He lost two of his brothers in a car crash in the Eastern Cape in 2007, and his third brother to cancer in April 2021.

"I BELIEVE ONLY TIME HEALS AND EVERYTHING HAPPENS FOR A REASON," HE SAYS.

He's done more than cope, transforming the heartbreak into a solid determination to save lives wherever possible. In the car crash, his brothers had died on the scene. "Understandably, nothing could have been done to save them. But, helping people and changing their lives for the better has always been my ambition," he says.



DISCOVERY FOUNDATION AWARDS
2021



UNPRECEDENTED STUDY ON WHY PATIENTS CANCEL SURGERIES

Dr Sukwana wants to turn as many colleagues as possible into skilled specialists and set up charities and educational opportunities in his struggling hometown of Tsomo. His Discovery Foundation Rural Individual Award will help him do a retrospective study on the prevalence and causes of cancellation of elective surgical procedures in Nelson Mandela Academic Hospital in Mthatha.

DISCOVERY FOUNDATION ALUMNA INSPIRES NEW GENERATION OF DOCTORS

Professor Busisiwe Mrara, a previous recipient of a Discovery Foundation Award and the Head of the Department of Anaesthesia and Critical Care at Nelson Mandela Hospital, is his mentor and inspiration.

"She's been supporting us from day one, even teaching us after hours. She instilled a passion for anaesthesia in us at a very early stage of our careers," he adds.



The suspicion is that most cancellations are avoidable. We think the main drivers are...

Scan to read the full story.



DR NCUMISA SABONA

{Rural Individual Awards}

Dr Ncumisa Sabona wants to upskill junior doctors in anaesthesiology in Mthatha

TOO MANY PREGNANT WOMEN ARE DYING IN MTHATHA

As her knowledge and skills increased, Dr Ncumisa Sabona learned how to detect the early warning signs of potentially fatal maladies in patients. Her Discovery Foundation Rural Individual Award will help her research the prevalence and risk factors of imaging-confirmed neurological complications among patients with hypertensive disorders in pregnancy.

“The neuro complications I’m researching are definitely not higher in Mthatha than the African average, but I’d say hypertension among our pregnant women runs as high as 15% to 20%. Just too many women die of both,” she says.

CALL FOR MORE AWARENESS AND BETTER EDUCATION

Dr Sabona wants more awareness campaigns around early hypertension clues like persistently high blood pressure, headaches, dizziness or loss of vision, and better education among primary healthcare workers to enable appropriate referral.

LACK OF SPECIALISTS IN MTHATHA

Dr Sabona says at present there are only five anaesthesiologists at Nelson Mandela Academic Hospital, which serves the sprawling former Transkei homeland.

“We easily need double this to even begin meeting the demand. So, I plan to add value when I get my MMed and teach juniors who want to get into this speciality,” she enthuses.

WHY DOES DR SABONA LOVE ANAESTHESIA?

“It encompasses everything you’ve learnt and you get to work with everyone in terms of patient profiles. Wherever they are, they eventually come to theatre and meet you,” she says.



The most challenging part of her job and how she copes? Keep reading to find out.



Dr

PIERRE = ANDRE

MANS

{Rural Individual Awards}

Ultrasound guru Dr Pierre-Andre Mans creates waves to get things done

There's nothing moderate about Zithulele District Hospital's third-year family medicine registrar, Dr Pierre-Andre Mans. He's the local ultrasound guru, creating waves to get things done, pursuing quality care and reaching diagnoses in double-quick time.

"BE THE GOOD"

"We believe in the concept of *kube kuhle*, the isiXhosa phrase for 'be the good', choosing to approach life, relationships and work differently," he says.

"Being a rural clinician, you find yourself confronted daily with the unknown, with sick patients having no clear diagnosis. This uncertainty and difficulty in accessing diagnoses drove me into studying ultrasound. It has radically transformed my work satisfaction, diagnostic capacity and the quality of our care. Ultrasound for me was *kube kuhle* in healthcare, a way to escape my frustration and improve patient care."



ULTRASOUND CAN TRANSFORM RURAL MEDICINE

It's little wonder then that Dr Mans successfully applied for a Discovery Foundation Rural Individual Award to explore what ultrasound skills a district-level medical practitioner should have. Having garnered a post-graduate diploma in ultrasound five years ago, he says that as a tool, it stands to transform the way rural medicine is practised.



Find out how he is using his Discovery Foundation Award funding.



DR TEBOGO THABA

{Rural Individual Awards}

“We have to stop the overcrowding”

Why does the casualty department at the Jubilee District Hospital in Hammanskraal outside Pretoria remain so overcrowded? That's the question third-year family medicine registrar Dr Tebogo Thaba aims to explore.

“OUR CASUALTY DEPARTMENT WORKS AT TRIPLE CAPACITY EVERY DAY”

Dr Thaba received a 2021 Discovery Foundation Rural Individual Award to investigate why so many non-emergency patients at her hospital bypass their designated referral clinic. The outcomes will have important implications for similar hard-pressed casualty units countrywide.





THE JOY OF FAMILY MEDICINE

“Family medicine is so special. You can turn your hand to almost anything. I find it so stimulating, because you’re not confined to just one area,” she enthuses.

After completing her MBChB at Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University, Dr Thaba did her internship at Witbank Hospital and began her community service at Jubilee Hospital in 2018, where she’s been ever since.



HELPING PEOPLE IS A “DREAM COME TRUE”

Read more about what keeps Dr Thaba motivated and how she sees the future of healthcare



Dr MARINE BELTRAN

{Rural Individual Awards}

Dr Marine Beltran believes
in treating the whole patient

French-born second-year psychiatry registrar Dr Marine Beltran predicts that the impact of COVID-19 on mental health will be severe and lasting.

The 2021 recipient of a Discovery Foundation Rural Individual Award is studying patient responses to treatment and the course of catatonia in Dora Nginza's acute mental health unit through Walter Sisulu University.

For her research, she'll be delving into the fairly well-studied phenomena of a suspected higher-than-national catatonia prevalence in the Dora Nginza Hospital area, with a focus on treatment dynamics.

By focusing on treatment responses, Dr Beltran is hoping to unearth data that can potentially shape a future treatment protocol.

**“THERE’S NO FIXED PROTOCOL,”
SHE SAYS.**

“I want to see if we’re doing enough when it comes to treatment guidelines, and see who responds how to what treatment – especially with different forms of benzodiazepines, the mainstay of treatment.”

The most rewarding aspect of her job is seeing debilitated, depressed or suicidal people discharged back to work after three or four months, transformed and grateful.

Dr Beltran is considering going into child and adolescent psychiatry to help catch mental illness early.



Learn more about her experiences and how she approaches mental healthcare.



DR YAKHEKA DYASI

{Rural Individual Awards}

“Doctors’ health matters.
We are also human.”

As an anaesthetic registrar working at Mthatha General Hospital in the Eastern Cape, Dr Yakheka Blossom Dyasi is alarmed by how many of her peers struggle with burnout, depression, substance abuse and suicidal ideations.

“In South Africa, burnout syndrome in anaesthetic registrars was reported to be about 27% in 2013,” she explains. “In 2020, it was at 36%. That’s an almost 10% increase!”

DISCOVERY FOUNDATION ALUMNA GUIDES THE WAY

Dr Dyasi’s research supervisor is none other than Professor Busisiwe Mrara, a former recipient of a Discovery Foundation Academic Fellowship Award who, in 2020, made history as the first ever super-specialist at Nelson Mandela Academic Hospital.



Why did she apply to Discovery? “I work in a disadvantaged province, the Eastern Cape, where burnout in anaesthetic registrars is a big problem. Mental health for doctors is a serious issue that does not get enough attention. Like COVID-19, it is close to being a pandemic.”



*Find out what inspired Dr Dyasi
and how she's managing her research.*



DISCOVERY FOUNDATION AWARDS
2021

Part 2:

DISCOVERY FOUNDATION INSTITUTIONAL AWARDS

This award aims to help improve the quality and delivery of healthcare through a one-year grant to an institution that supports training and capacity development in rural and underserved areas.

DISCOVERY FOUNDATION INSTITUTIONAL
AWARDS 2021



STASHA JORDAN

{Rural Institutional Awards}

South African Breastmilk Reserve
– a lifeline for mothers and babies

Innovative research by the South African Breastmilk Reserve is set to save millions of rands and untold lives of mothers and babies. The veteran NGO will use its infrastructure and capacity to test donated breastmilk for HIV and hepatitis B instead of taking blood samples.

Founded by Executive Director, Stasha Jordan, the South African Breastmilk Reserve has breastmilk banks in 27 public tertiary hospitals and provides life-saving milk to 80 neonatal units across the country. It has proved itself agile in responding to dire, even more basic needs of mothers and babies. With the COVID-19 pandemic, access restrictions have resulted in mothers unable to meet daily feeding requirements of hospitalised babies.

Thanks to this initiative, 5,729 hospitalised premature babies received breastfeeding support from the South African Breastmilk Reserve in 2020 and 2021 – 2,700 more than in the previous financial year.



GROUNDBREAKING VIROLOGY RESEARCH KICKS IN

In May 2021, the NGO received the Discovery Foundation Rural Institutional Award to the value of R500,000 to do groundbreaking virology research at the University of Pretoria. "Instead of drawing blood, we'll use the breastmilk to run the pathology," says Jordan. "The cost savings and industry implications are profound."



*Read how this lifeline for mothers
became a lifeline for others.*





DR LEIGH WAGNER

{Rural Institutional Awards}

“What’s my purpose?” – Dr Leigh Wagner champions healthy behaviour change in Khayelitsha

Unless motivation comes from within, no amount of resources, equipment, facilities or staffing can enable a doctor to make a real difference in their community. That’s the view of family physician, Dr Leigh Wagner, who trains primary healthcare professionals to teach lifestyle-changing behaviours to patients living with diabetes in Khayelitsha.

COVID-19 – A NIGHTMARE FOR PEOPLE WITH DIABETES

Dr Wagner has found that COVID-19 is diabetogenic – meaning it has caused full-blown diabetes in the people of Khayelitsha who were already vulnerable to the condition. This has made her work as a behaviour change agent even more vital.

FOR DR WAGNER, ATTITUDE IS EVERYTHING

“I ask myself, why am I here and what am I contributing, in spite of my circumstances and background?” she says. “We need to foster an attitude of resilience.”



*Find out how Dr Wagner will use her Discovery
Foundation Award to make an impact in Khayelitsha.*







DR JOLEEN CAIRNCROSS

{Rural Institutional Awards}

Dr Joleen Cairncross educates healthcare workers and patients on lifestyle diseases

Cape Town-based Dr Joleen Cairncross' promising comprehensive patient education and counselling implementation pilot project will change lifestyle behaviour in communities.

HELPING PATIENTS MAKE HEALTHY LIFESTYLE CHOICES

Her projects so far have centred on individual behaviour-change counselling for lifestyle risk factors. She also provides group education for patients with diabetes, asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and hypertension.

The Rural Institutional Award will help her to implement group empowerment and training for patients with type 2 diabetes.

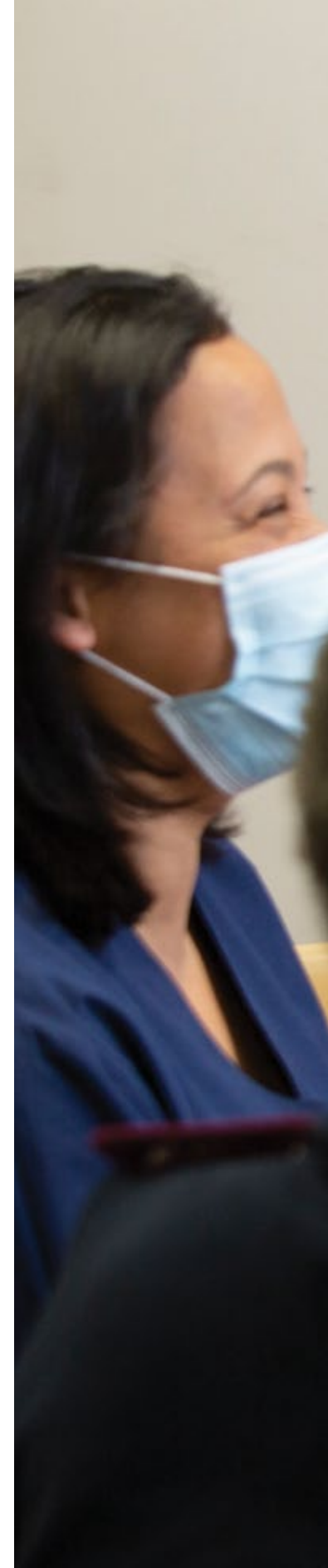
“PATIENTS ARE THE EXPERTS”

“We empower them with knowledge on diabetes. The peer support atmosphere helps them overcome challenges,” she explains. She says helping her trainees to adopt a patient-centred guiding style is far more effective than the more ubiquitous, ‘the doctor says so’ top-down approach.

“We must become super-spreaders of this training, creating a pandemic of fighting diabetes,” she laughs.



*Find out more
about her work.*





DISCOVERY FOUNDATION AWARDS
2021

Part 3:

DISCOVERY
FOUNDATION
DISTINGUISHED
VISITOR AWARDS

DISCOVERY FOUNDATION
DISTINGUISHED VISITOR AWARDS 2019





PROF HOFFIE CONRADIE

{Distinguished Visitor Awards}

A lifetime of enhancing rural medicine

From running online courses for stressed, burnt-out healthcare workers to trailblazing hands-on rural medicine training in far-flung hospitals, “retired” family medicine veteran, Professor Hoffie Conradie, continues to alleviate pressure for others.

In 2011, he co-founded the highly regarded Ukwanda Rural Clinical School at the University of Stellenbosch. Hundreds of final-year Matie medical students have spent their final year gaining practical experience in healthcare facilities in the region.

THE PROFESSOR ON THE MOVE

His Discovery Foundation Rural Distinguished Visitor Award will help him to continue supporting fifth-year medical students at the Walter Sisulu University in Mthatha.

“I make sure they identify the learning needs from the patient they saw and ask them to present their findings and how they addressed these. The rest of the day we do ward rounds and if the other doctors can join, they do,” he explains.

Earlier in 2021, Prof Conradie spent five weeks with family physician registrars at Madwaleni Provincial Hospital and Zithulele Hospital as part of another Discovery grant after their supervising family physicians had moved on.

ENHANCING COMMUNICATION THROUGH "VULA"

Prof Conradie has been working closely with Dr William Mapham, a former Madwaleni Hospital stalwart, ophthalmologist and inventor of the Vula referral app. Together, they're adapting Vula for educational purposes by making it possible for students and supporting training supervisors to communicate via the app.

“I wanted to create a learner-friendly environment that counters any shaming or embarrassing that can so easily occur. It promotes self-directed learning and confidence.”



*Keep reading about the professor's
commitment to public healthcare.*





DR TOM BOYLES

{Distinguished Visitor Awards}

Living his dream adventure

The clinical management of complex patients with advanced HIV in rural settings, including maternal care, ideally requires specialist management.

Right now, Madwaleni Hospital hosts three long-term, experienced anchor doctor couples who attract young doctors eager to learn the rural healthcare ropes. It's part of two thriving, vocation-based communities, the other centred on the Discovery Foundation award-winning Zithulele Hospital, a steep valley away.

One of the reasons for the current high staffing is senior specialist in infectious diseases and HIV medicine, Dr Tom Boyles, who spent three years at Madwaleni as its clinical manager 14 years ago. Back for a year as a Discovery Foundation Distinguished Visitor, Dr Boyles will supervise young doctors and clinical associates, teaching them the ins and outs of managing difficult HIV patient disease profiles.

IDYLIC SETTING BELIES CHALLENGES

The English-born Dr Boyles came to South Africa in 2007 as a 36-year-old doctor in search of adventure. He married local lawyer, Lynne Wilkinson, who now helps run the Bulungula Incubator, an eco-friendly social-upliftment project on the picturesque Xhora River estuary. Healthcare education and awareness are woven into the social fabric of the local village.

"My main focus here is on training medical officers to be mentors of the younger staff, consisting of interns, community service officers and clinical associates. There's a limit to what one person can do in a year, but I hope to leave some sustainable expertise behind," he says.

HIGH HIV BURDEN IN THE RURAL EASTERN CAPE

Turning to his training, he says South Africa tends to have very good generalists, but very few specialists in rural hospitals. “The HIV prevalence around here is probably about 20%, with pregnant women in antenatal care at around 35%, and I specialise in advanced HIV disease,” he says.



What would he do if he had a magic wand to change things? Keep reading to find out.



DR ERROL VISSER

{Distinguished Visitor Awards}

Dr Errol Visser upskills emergency responders in the Northern Cape

Part of an elite group of emergency medicine physicians known as first responders, flown to the world's trauma and disease hotspots, Somerset West's Dr Errol Visser used the COVID-19-induced hiatus to help locally.

More accustomed to setting up hospitals for the United Nations in places like Mogadishu, the capital of Somalia, while under gunfire and bombing attacks, he's now embarking on a different challenge – one that aims to reduce illnesses and ailments in underserved local rural communities.

This is where the long-standing Stellenbosch University Medical Faculty's Ukwanda Centre for Rural Health, backed by Discovery's Rural Distinguished Visitor Award, comes in. The R250,000 Discovery Foundation grant will enable Dr Visser's multi-disciplinary outreach team to set up sustainable training and research initiatives at clinics, thus improving referral pathways to the Dr Harry Surtie Hospital.

"DISTANCES ARE AN OBSTACLE TO CARE"

Dr Visser says, "During a tour of the clinics there in 2019 and 2020, I found that there was very little co-operation between them and the local hospitals. For example, if a patient had a heart attack in Springbok, they had to go on a four-hour road trip to Upington and then fly to Kimberly."



UPSKILLING EMERGENCY RESPONDERS IN THE NORTHERN CAPE

Dr Visser's ambition is to upskill emergency responders at Dr Harry Surtie Hospital and its clinic network, enabling timely responses to emergencies in the vast region.

“I managed to wheedle my way into Dr Harry Surtie Hospital to get them to assist too. Groote Schuur Hospital and the University of the Western Cape staffers are volunteering their free time, including setting up oral cancer screening. We’ve got ophthalmologists, physiotherapists, a counselling social worker, a dietitian and three emergency medicine doctors,” he says.



*Find out more about
Dr Visser's future plans.*





DR TEBOGO MOABELO- MONARENG

{Distinguished Visitor Awards}

Clear vision of a distant horizon

With just two qualified ophthalmologists and two other eye specialists, Mankweng Hospital's eye clinic helps up to 150 patients a day.

Dr Moabelo-Monareng says, "The pressure is immense. If you look at Limpopo Province, there are only three qualified public sector ophthalmologists, and two ophthalmologists awaiting the outcome of their dissertations. We're a large, rural province with a population of just over five million."

COVID-19 BRINGS FEWER PATIENTS, LESS CARE

They have 36 ophthalmology beds which are "always full when there are no COVID-19 issues," she says. But in early August 2021, these were occupied by just a handful of patients awaiting emergency eye surgery, with all elective procedures in the two dedicated theatres postponed.

These are among the reasons why Dr Moabelo-Monareng successfully facilitated an application for a Discovery Foundation Rural Distinguished Visitor Award to enable private sector ophthalmologists to supervise and train the nine medical officers and two registrars on site at her clinic.



OUTREACH SORELY NEEDED

The Mankweng Hospital ophthalmology team regularly manages to do outreach visits to and operations at some of the peripheral Limpopo hospitals. Dr Moabelo-Monareng hopes to secure future grants to expand this and reach more people.

UPSKILLING DREAM

Dr Moabelo-Monareng's dream is to see other funders and businesses, in addition to the Discovery Foundation, "come on board and help with what is a hugely worthwhile mission".

Now living in Polokwane with her husband, Mothei, an electrical engineer, she fell in love with ophthalmology when she witnessed her first 'miraculous' sight-restoring cataract operation as a student at the University of Cape Town.



Find out more about her vision for the future.

DR JONATHAN PONS

{Distinguished Visitor Awards}

Creating vision for colleagues and patients

Eswatini-based ophthalmic surgeon, Dr Jonathan Pons, thrives on overcoming seemingly insurmountable rural healthcare challenges to restore vision, and thus income and dignity, to people living with crippling blindness in remote, impoverished communities.

A co-founder of the intrepid Rural Doctors Association of South Africa (RuDASA) with 30 years of hard-won experience, he now specialises in setting up eye care clinics, be they are in war-torn Sudan or southern African countries.

"There's no more blindness in this country"

His base is the Good Shepherd Mission Hospital in Eswatini where he's developed an eye clinic and outreach programme that have virtually eliminated blindness in the small country during his 20-year tenure.

WORKING DAILY MIRACLES

"The lifespan of an ordinary African in Kenya and Malawi is just five years if they're diagnosed with cataract blindness," he says.

Dr Pons firmly believes cataract surgery to restore sight is the single biggest value-for-money intervention possible in medicine. He says it takes an average of 15 minutes to restore a person's eyesight.



EYE CARE OUTREACH IN RURAL NORTHERN CAPE

In 2021, Dr Pons received a Discovery Foundation Rural Distinguished Visitor Award to travel to the under-resourced and under-staffed Dr Harry Surtie Hospital in Upington in the Northern Cape where he'll set up a dedicated, sustainable eye clinic with outreach services.

RESTORING INCOMES AND SELF-WORTH

"Establishing cataract surgery and setting up referral systems opens the door to improvements in the harder-to-reach areas of blindness such as glaucoma and diabetic retinopathy. We could make a lot of blind people very happy, not to mention the knock-on value in morale building among hospital staff."



Find out more about Dr Pons.



DISCOVERY FOUNDATION AWARDS
2021





DISCOVERY FOUNDATION AWARDS
2021



FLIP OVER TO READ 2020

**DOCTORS
WITH PURPOSE**

UNMASKED

