

Pierre Jaques Award for the Rural Doctor of the Year 2009

The rural doctor of the year for 2009 is Dr JJ Ongole from Piet Retief Hospital, Mpumalanga. He was recognised for his contribution to integrated HIV and TB care in Piet Retief Hospital.

The Rural Doctors Association of Southern Africa (RuDASA), in cooperation with the South African Academy of Family Practice/Primary Care and the South African Medical Association, inaugurated this annual award in 2002. The award is given to a rural doctor, working at the coal face, who is judged by the RuDASA Committee to have made a significant contribution towards rural health in the previous year. The award was named after Dr Pierre Jaques, a founder member of RuDASA and a doyen of rural practice in South Africa. He spent most of his working life at Elim Hospital in rural Limpopo province and was a tireless advocate for rural health and the role of the rural doctor in South Africa.

The first recipient of the award, in 2002, was Dr Thys von Mollendorf, previously medical superintendent of Rob Ferreira Hospital in Nelspruit, Mpumalanga. Subsequent recipients of the award have been as follows:

- 2003: Dr Victor Fredlund, from Mseleni Hospital in northern KwaZuluNatal
- 2004: Dr Hermann Reuter, from MSF in Lusikisiki in the Eastern Cape
- 2005: Dr Nigel Hoffman, from Rietvlei Hospital in the Eastern Cape
- 2006: Dr Vanga Siwisa, from Taung, North West Province
- 2007: Dr Gert Marincowitz, from Tzaneen, Limpopo Province
- 2008: Dr Munyadziwa Kwindu from Donald Frazer Hospital, Limpopo Province

The award was announced at the annual Rural Health Conference, held in Broederstroom, North West, 27-29 August 2009, and was sponsored by African Health Placements. The integration of HIV and TB was discussed at the conference as an important strategy to improve care, and it is fitting that the rural doctor award goes to someone who already puts this into practice. In addition to his clinical work, Dr Ongole is extensively involved with training health workers in the field of HIV and TB.

Dr Mndebele explained her nomination of Dr Ongole: "The reason why I am nominating this doctor is because of his dedication in improving the management of HIV and TB patients, his continued dedication in passing knowledge and skills to junior staff. He is the kind of person who wants everyone to go for training; he wants people to develop career wise; he is not a boss but one of us. He is always willing to listen to everyone and he makes sure that the whole team is working well together."

As the conference was held in North West, a second award was given to recognise the North West Rural Doctor of the Year. This was presented to Dr Umaru Ahmadu-Ali, who was runner-up for the national award. Dr Ali was

nominated by students from Wits who worked with him during their Integrated Primary Care rotation. He is recognised for his work at Atamelang Health Centre in Delareyville and in clinics throughout the sub-district. His colleagues describe him as someone who is passionate about quality of care at the clinics, and who is always available to help. The students wrote that he “epitomises what it truly means to be a doctor. Very rarely have we seen a person teach with such passion and enthusiasm as that with which we were taught.”

Despite the huge challenges in rural health care that were discussed at the conference, there are pockets of excellence, where ordinary people do extraordinary things. RuDASA is delighted to recognise colleagues who are outstanding role models and who continue to inspire us.



Dr JJ Ongole



Dr Umaru Ahmadu-Ali