

RuDASA Rural Doctor of the Year 2016: Dr Nomlindo Makubalo

Nomlindo Princess Makubalo was born in Eastern Cape in the rural areas of the former Transkei. She matriculated in 1991 at St Patrick's High School but, due to financial constraints, Nomlindo could not follow her dream of going to medical school and so completed a diploma in Medical Technology at Peninsula Technikon. After completing her diploma in 1995, she worked in Mthatha General Hospital for 2 years as a medical technologist.

As it was always her dream to become a doctor, she applied and received a bursary to study medicine at the University of Cape Town and qualified in 2003. In 2004 Nomlindo did her internship at Frere Hospital followed by community service at St Barnabas in 2005. At St Barnabas she was put in charge of the paediatric ward and the successes and challenges of this paediatric ward inspired her to specialise in paediatrics. 2006 saw Nomlindo working as a senior medical officer at Red Cross Children's Hospital and obtained a Diploma in Child Health. In 2011 she obtained a Fellowship in Paediatrics. Her path to her current post as DCST Paediatrician has not been easy – as her dream of being a clinician was cut short by her acute latex allergy (with numerous ICU admissions) and even her job as a genetics sub-speciality suffered the same fate. During that period she complete an Advanced Health Management Program with FPD, co-certified with Yale University in 2013.

But when one door closes, another opens and Nomlindo followed the path to an administrative role as a DCST Paediatrician in EC – a job that fits her like a glove. She has been working as district clinical specialist (paediatrics) in Nelson Mandela Bay since 2013, with a mandate to reduce maternal and child mortality.

Using the Child PIP programme, Nomlindo identified a gap in her knowledge that led her to pursue a Diploma in HIV (CMSA). She now uses her HIV knowledge to support facilities in improving the care of HIV infected children. She is also currently enrolled and will soon graduate from the Post Graduate Diploma for community Paediatrics offered at Red Cross Hospital, UCT.

Some of the major successes in EC have been to advocate for improvement of quality of care given to children by co-coordinating Child PIP training, advocating for procuring of critical equipment in hospitals and establishing high care beds, opening of neonatal units in district hospitals, creating tracing system for patients who test HIV positive with PCR in order to improve early diagnosis and initiation of treatment for children. Nomlindo has trained doctors and nurses in remote areas on protocols such as Helping Babies Breathe (HBB); Management of Small and Sick Neonate (MSSN); Emergency Triage Assessment and Treatment (ETAT). She has trained nurses and doctors on genetics which has resulted in early identification of children with genetic conditions and early referral. She has opened the only genetic clinic in EC province and manages children from most districts! Under her leadership EMS waiting times improved in Nelson Mandela Bay Health district and Sarah Baartman district. She supports doctors and nurses in all the districts and is currently acting at provincial level as DCST paediatrician.

She receives her strength from God Almighty by acknowledging that her job is a calling . Caring and making a difference that is what inspires her to keep going. Her church and family especially twin sister and her son have been her support structure and source of strength. During her spare time she enjoys church activities, quality time with family and poetry. Her mentors include Natasha Rhoda, Anne Robertson and Tony Westwood.