



Rural Doctor of the Year Award Winner 2022

Dr Craig Parker did not start his medicine career early on, he took a few side roads: from 1993 working in mechanical engineering at mines in South Africa and Zambia, then a degree in physiology through UNISA. Family life also took over and it was only in 2011 he decided to follow his dream and applied to the GEMP program at WITS.

After 2 years of internship at Frere, Craig was placed at Victoria hospital in Alice for community service. During the week he stayed in Hogsback, commuting back home in East London on weekends. During his community service year he experienced the joys and challenges of a district hospital at Victoria Hospital in Alice. As a community service doctor (and even as a medical student!) Craig was always kept busy fixing equipment in the wards. His Leatherman was used just as much as his stethoscope! He then moved back to Frere working first in paediatric surgery then anaesthetics.



Early on he showed his intelligence and business acumen, he also has amazing charm; but it is his work during the COVID epidemic that was outstanding. In 2020 the Umoja team was marshalled together by Craig. The team consists of engineers, doctors, designers, 3D printing specialists and project managers from across a host of industries. The vision of the team was to save lives during the COVID pandemic by finding innovative solutions for patients with breathing problems. The team was founded in East London where the reality of resource constraints in the provision of health services in Eastern Cape are all too

real and they needed to develop solutions that would fit our resource constrained environments. Collaboration and a spirit of generosity predominated the work with people giving their skills and time freely to support the initiative.

The first commercial product was the **OxERA™** (Oxygen efficient respiratory aid) which provided effective, oxygen efficient, affordable respiratory support for patients infected with COVID19. It was licensed under COVID emergency regulations within 6 months. These devices have been used both locally, regionally and internationally as part of the Covid response, including Zimbabwe, Zambia, eSwatini, Peru and Bolivia. The device is to appear in the 2022 edition of the WHO compendium, which is issued by the WHO each year notifying countries of devices that would improve health care.

Dr Parker's leadership, knowledge and understanding of engineering, clinical and social fields was instrumental in the development of the OxERA product. He continues to provide leadership at UMOYA as they have been asked to assist with a number of other innovations to improve health care, specifically in resource constrained environments. Craig and the UMOYA team have registered the company so that all monies are invested back into the company, for further developments. We salute the leadership, vision, engineering and medical talents of Craig, and applaud this very humble doctor for the extraordinary work he is involved in, improving the health of people in resource constrained environments.

<https://youtu.be/NW1eBSROLzY>