

**JANUARY 2025 | ISSUE NO. 2**

# **THE SIDE EFFECT**



**YOUR TRUSTED DOSE OF WELLNESS IN  
MPUMALANGA**

## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

As we bid farewell to 2024, in this special issue, we invite you to join us in reflecting on a year of extraordinary triumphs and transformative growth. The past twelve months have been a testament to our collective resilience, pushing us to new heights and imparting invaluable wisdom that will stay with us forever.

Amidst the triumphs, we also experienced heart-wrenching losses that left an indelible mark on our hearts. We honour the memories of those we lost and acknowledge the pain and sadness that accompanied their passing.

With gratitude for the past and hope for the future, we step into the new year with renewed purpose, determination, and a heart full of love.

As you read through the pages of this article, we hope that you'll ignite with a spark of inspiration to achieve greatness in your profession. May the stories, insights, and experiences shared within these pages motivate you to push beyond your limits, challenge the status quo, and strive for excellence.

*We'd love to hear from you! Feel free to reach out to us at [thesideeffect.bsh@gmail.com](mailto:thesideeffect.bsh@gmail.com) with your comments or if you'd like to contribute to future editions.*

### MS. NCOBILE MASEKO

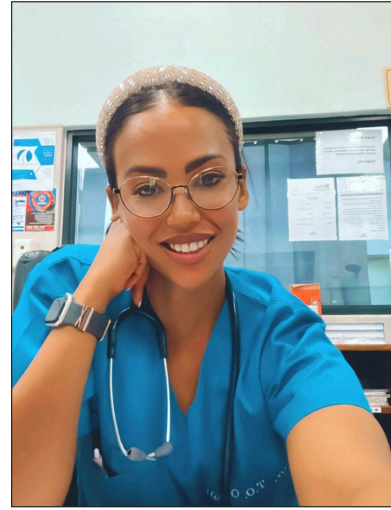
Pharmacist  
Bernice Samuel Hospital



"Each capsule contains your medication,  
plus a treatment for each of its side effects."

## THE SIDE EFFECT

## IN THE SPOTLIGHT



DR TIFFNEY ORTELL  
MEDICAL OFFICER  
BERNICE SAMUEL HOSPITAL

*In this issue, we cast a candid spotlight on Dr. Tiffney Ortell, a distinguished medical officer at Bernice Samuel Hospital and recipient of the PASSMA award, honoring her exceptional prescribing practices.*

### 1. What inspired you to choose medicine as a career?

A close relative of mine was very ill growing up. I spent a lot of time in hospitals as a child and immediately realised that I needed to help other sick people when I grow up.

### 2. If you weren't a doctor, what do you think you would be?

A lawyer

### 3. What is your favourite pastime?

- Running, training for marathons
- Interior decorating
- Time with friends and family

### 4. Do you have a hidden talent that most of your colleagues don't know about?

Yes, I can cook and bake quite well.

### 5. If you could swap jobs with anyone in the hospital for a day, who would it be and why?

The kitchen staff, because I enjoy cooking.

### 6. What is the funniest work situation you have encountered?

The most fun I had at work was the Amazing Race day where we ran around the hospital like headless chickens looking for clues.

### 7. Do you have a favourite snack that keeps you going on long shifts?

Yes, Whispers chocolates.

### 8. What is the most rewarding part of your job?

Seeing patients from start to discharge in the wards.  
Seeing how they get better day by day.

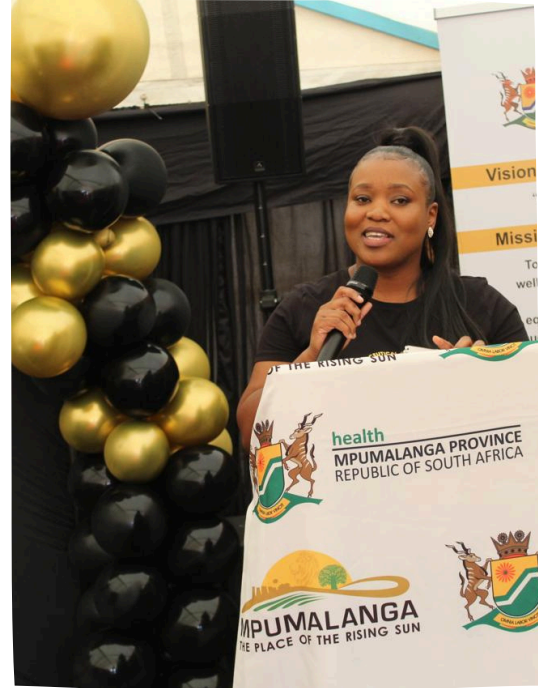
### 9. What is the latest TV show you have binge-watched?

Selling Sunset on Netflix

### 10. Looking at the past year, what has been your proudest moment or accomplishment in your role as a medical officer?

When I finally managed to get one of my very sick kidney patients in to the dialysis programme at Witbank Hospital.





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# CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE IN HEALTHCARE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT: PASSMA 2024

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The healthcare industry thrives on precision and efficiency, not only in patient care but also in the meticulous management of critical resources. Recognizing the unsung heroes behind this vital aspect, the second annual Pharmaceutical and Surgical Stock Management Awards (PASSMA) took centre stage this financial year. Hosted at Bernice Samuel Hospital on 17 April 2024, the event celebrated remarkable achievements in pharmaceutical and surgical supply management while fostering collaboration with various hospital departments.

This year's ceremony expanded its scope to promote inclusivity, honouring all individuals involved in pharmacy-related processes. Rubrics were meticulously developed to evaluate the contributions of doctors, nurses, groundsmen, cleaners, and patient administration staff. These criteria assessed daily practices, awarding points for adherence to best practices. The highest-scoring individuals were recognized for their exemplary accomplishments, underscoring the critical role they play in maintaining the hospital's operational excellence. Furthermore, the transport department was honoured for their dedication in assisting with the collection of critical stock items across Provinces.

Guided by the charismatic master of ceremony, Mr. Sam Ugembe, the event served as a true source of inspiration, featuring an impressive lineup of speakers. Among them were Mamolefe Selokela, Director of the African Traditional Medicine Programme in Mpumalanga, and Dr Courage Khoza, Public Health Medicine Specialist Nkangala Health District, who delivered thought-provoking speeches. Each speaker offered a unique perspective, sharing compelling stories and valuable insights that deeply resonated with the audience. Their passionate address-

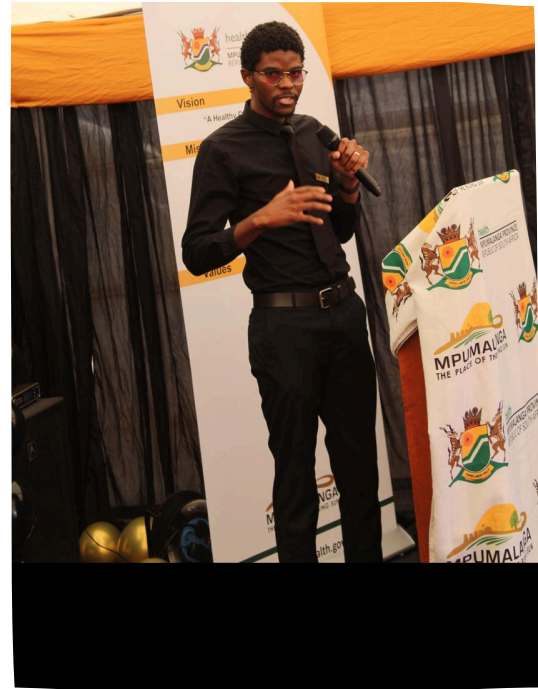
ses made the event an unforgettable experience for everyone in attendance.

As the second instalment of PASSMA, this year's event set a high benchmark for future editions. The focus on innovation and collaboration demonstrated the immense potential for continued improvement in pharmaceutical and surgical stock management. The event celebrated the accomplishments of this year's winners and provided a platform for the CEO, Dr Franco Tema, to showcase the district awards earned by Bernice Samuel Hospital during the year.





# PASSMA 2024







We are thrilled to report that *The Side Effect* was launched during the PASSMA event. This groundbreaking publication is the first of its kind in the Province, dedicated to highlighting the incredible contributions of healthcare professionals in the communities they serve. Through inspiring stories, interviews, and impactful insights, *The Side Effect* aims to shine a spotlight on the individuals and teams making a difference in people's lives every day.

As the PASSMA awards continue to grow in prestige, we aim to inspire even greater advancements in stock management practices. The organizers are already preparing for the next event, aiming to provide an even broader platform for sharing best practices and fostering collaboration across the province in the years to come.

### PASSMA Winners 2024

- 1. Best Performing Unit in Good Pharmacy Practice Standards and Healthcare Waste Management:** Theatre
- 2. Most Improved Unit in Healthcare Waste Management:** Maternity
- 3. Most Improved Unit in Good Pharmacy Practice Standards:** Emergency Medical Services
- 4. Recognition of Outstanding Prescribing Practices:** Dr Tiffney Ortell
- 5. Recognition of Outstanding Service in Ordering of Stock:** Mr. Thapelo Mpila
- 6. Outstanding Effort and Going Above and Beyond the Call of Duty for Patients:** Dr Joanna Greyling and Dr Bongane Myeni
- 7. Achieving and Maintaining Superior Cleaning Standards:** Ms. Christina Maphumulo
- 8. Ongoing Support and Dedication in Maintaining the Hospital Grounds:** Mr. Mduduzi Dlamini
- 9. Exception Support in Providing Reliable and Efficient Transport of Critical Stock Items:** Transport Department
- 10. Dedication and extraordinary service in administration:** Mr. Tshepo Thulare

**KHADIJA KHAN**  
Pharmacist  
Bernice Samuel Hospital



## AUTOBIOGRAPHY SNAPSHOT

### MS. REFILOE MOGALE

*We are delighted to launch our autobiography series with the remarkable story of Ms. Refiloe Mogale, a visionary pharmacist and Executive Director of Pharmaceutical Society of South Africa (PSSA). As a trailblazing pharmacist, Ms Mogale has played a pivotal role in transforming pharmaceutical services in Mpumalanga, leaving an indelible mark in the industry. In this captivating article, she takes us on a journey through her early days, her most significant challenges, and her most triumphant moments, offering a unique glimpse into the life and career of a true pharmacy leader.*

- Ms. N.G. MASEKO



My journey as a Pharmacist began at the University of the Witwatersrand, where I completed my four years of undergraduate study. I did my internship at Kalafong Tertiary Hospital, where I learned a lot of discipline as a pharmacist. I had an extremely strict tutor, who really demonstrated the qualities of a disciplined pharmacist and who respected the profession.

This is what I believe today: the tutor, and the pharmacy where you do internship, moulds you into the Pharmacist you will become. Whether the pharmacy creates a positive and encouraging environment or permeates a toxic and lax outlook, the type of Pharmacists it produces will reflect that environment.

I enjoyed my internship so much that I hoped and wanted the Gauteng Department of Health (DoH) to absorb me. Unfortunately, they marked me with a "Return-to-Sender" stamp, the sender being the Mpumalanga DoH (they had partially paid for my tuition fees). I had to relocate to Piet Retief Hospital, Mpumalanga, where the department had

placed me, after clearly stating my preference of Witbank Hospital or Rob Ferreira Hospital. The trend of wanting to be placed in cities or metros is not a new thing, so when I see young pharmacists throw tantrums about being placed in rural areas, I do not pay much attention to them because to me it is a "been there, done that" moment.

The trip to Piet Retief took us two taxis (from Witbank to Ermelo; then from Ermelo to Piet Retief) and as a regular public transport user, we know that the taxi does not leave the "station" until it is full. So, a trip that was supposed to last 2,5 hours, took us 7 hours. Fortunately, the hospital CEO and the District Manager were very accommodating as they were expecting their first ever permanent Pharmacist. All along the pharmacy was managed by a community service Pharmacist - who only worked for 2 hours a day - and a registered Nurse who only assisted with stock management.

Since it was myself and the general assistant in the pharmacy, I informed the CEO that I needed Pharmacist's Assistants. And since the pharmacy was not registered with the South African Pharmacy Council (SAPC), the CEO went to one of the local schools and asked to be directed to unemployed youth who have just matriculated. Bear in mind, no qualification or experience was required, and none of the recruitment processes were employed. I was "gifted" three "assistants" whom I had to train from scratch. I am today proud that they eventually qualified as post-basic Pharmacist's Assistants and are still serving the Piet Retief community. A lesson from this is that we do not have limited chances to have the things we want, because nothing is worse than missing a life-changing opportunity. The current state of entitlement displayed by some Pharmacists who think the tasks assigned to them are "below" them or that they are better than their supervisors is disappointing to witness.

In Piet Retief, I had to change and implement proper pha-



armacy practices, which was difficult for the staff and other healthcare workers to adjust to and was met with a lot of resistance. Fortunately, the CEO and the District Manager were incredibly supportive and provided me with as many resources to do my work, including qualifying for a subsidised car which enabled me to visit and support all the clinics and attend meetings.

I remember one incident after having trained and monitored the PHC nurses on stock management – particularly preventing over/understocking – we agreed that those who do not implement the minimum and maximum levels, would not be issued the quantities they have ordered until they comply. One clinic manager reported me to the local Chief stating that “this young girl” is refusing to supply the community with medicines. I had to present and defend my case in front of the Chief but was not given a chance to because I was wearing pants. Apparently, women should always wear dresses when presenting themselves to the Chief, and I did not know – oh to be young and naïve. This just showed that the lessons are not only limited to the office but the surrounding environment.

What I learnt from Piet Retief was the obvious display of public healthcare system rooted with inequalities, with rural and underserved communities experiencing poorer health outcomes. As a young Pharmacist I confronted these inequalities daily and strived to bridge gaps in access to medicines and pharmaceutical services. But there was that sense of purpose where one is drawn by a desire to serve vulnerable populations. I partook in many committees such as the pharmaceuticals and therapeutics committee (PTC), pharmacovigilance, medicine supply management, etc. as a commitment to drive meaningful and impactful work which came with its own set of challenges and rewards. Above all, a supportive, present and responsive management team is key to improved pharmaceutical services.

Unfortunately, I had to request a transfer to Witbank due to personal reasons. I was then placed at Impungwe Hospital which at that time served as a mini Depot for the Emalahleni clinics and was part of the Witbank Hospital cluster. The Pharmacy Manager at Witbank hospital was incredibly supportive and exposed me to a lot of trade secrets. I assisted with the training of Pharmacist Interns and Pharmacist’s Assistants. I became the secretary of the provincial PTC and got to implement a lot of policies in a multidisciplinary team. I was fortunate that these teams were highly functional during that time and produced a lot of decent work, some of which is still being used today.



I must say that being an independent Pharmacy Manager at an early stage allowed me to create an environment that I would be proud of as a Pharmacist. Most of the Pharmacists today find themselves under the supervision of another manager and are stationed in one section in the pharmacy. Personally, I feel that is limiting and produces narrow-minded Pharmacists, unreceptive and nonchalant, with limited experience. Working at Impungwe Hospital taught me that working in resource-constrained environments encourages one to be adaptable, develops one’s problem-solving skills, and increases resilience. As a Pharmacist, I certainly learnt to innovate and develop creative solutions to address some of the gaps in the pharmacy. I really believe that my passion for pharmacy was noticeable to others as I was recruited to become a Principal Pharmacist at Philadelphia Hospital, a regional hospital. This turned out to be quite different from my initial exposure. The work culture-shock I experienced was on another level. On chronic clinic days, we would see close to eight hundred patients per day.

One day during the first month after my appointment, I arrived early in the morning and the pharmacy staff was nowhere to be seen. Upon enquiry I was informed that it is pay day, and the staff comes to work in shifts. I am not sure if this was some form of initiation by the staff, but it was an unforgettable experience. Philadelphia hospital was a typical public sector facility which served a large number of patients daily, leading to high workloads for us as Pharmacists. This really required efficient time management skills because sometimes we would finish serving patients after 6pm. I had to come up with new, radical, and innovative ways of assisting patients because it really was inhumane to keep them waiting for an entire day in the hospital. The Medical Manager was not impressed with the new system but eventually adopted it because the CEO was a visionary and saw how it would





change things. The pharmacy received an award for that innovation which was encouraging for the pharmacy staff.

When a new Head of Pharmaceutical Services (HOPS) was employed, there was a lot of displeasure and fear from the Pharmaceutical Depot. Thus, an exodus of Pharmacists at the Depot was experienced. Myself and other Pharmacists were asked to go and oversee the situation. I must say that managing the depot was the most fulfilling task I did. I monitored the service provider ensuring that they did everything according to the service level agreement. The new experiences on pharmaceutical supply management, warehouse management, contract management were character building.

The concept of medicine and medical supplies shortages is not a new thing - but honestly it has never been this bad as it is recently. As depot manager, I had to find creative solutions to ensure patients receive necessary treatments despite the challenges. Personally, I have seen the worst and the best of the warehouse structure.

The greatest achievement was seeing the completion of the new warehouse in Middelburg and the successful transferring of the entire warehouse from Bronkhorstpruit to Middelburg. It is a pity that I did not get to enjoy that win because unbeknownst to me, there were interests in the depot. The distress of finding that out was painful, disparaging, embarrassing and undeserved. However, it happened, and it was what it was.

Those interests compelled me to be deployed to the Nkangala district office. What a lonely and "you are on your own" journey that was but I managed to turn that around. I had to craft a new strategy on what pharmacy really is because the belief was that pharmacy means medicine availability. This might be true, but Pharmacists provide much more than that as we work within a framework that prioritizes fair healthcare delivery and addresses the healthcare needs of various populations, including those in underserved and rural areas.

The aim was to ensure that as Pharmacists we are recognised as crucial contributors and participants in a collaborative environment which encourages teamwork and a shared commitment to patient-centred care. I often found myself collaborating with multidisciplinary teams, PHC nurses, CEOs, including program managers (at all levels) and playing an advisory role. To gain trust from all these stakeholders required a lot of patience because, on a number of occasions, there was rejection and non-acceptance.

The success of getting buy-in from nurses and doctors for the implementation of several innovations like Stock Visibility System (SVS), Central Chronic Medicine Dispensing and Distribution (CCMDD), introduction of PHC Pharmacists bringing pharmaceutical services into the limelight, was really a highlight of my patience and endurance. However, I am sure that if there was an equitable and fair treatment of all programs and not prioritising "rich" programs in the department, I would have achieved a lot for the district in terms of pharmaceutical services. The unequal distribution of resources was a hard pill to swallow, and I tried to ensure that the incoming new Pharmacists do not experience such because it really is demoralising. Considering the nature of the newer generation of Pharmacists, their patience levels are limited and might not be able to tolerate being treated as insignificant.

Overall, my journey as a Pharmacist in Mpumalanga was both fulfilling and frustrating. However, it served as a testament to dedication, resilience, and an inherent commitment to improving pharmaceutical services access for all. Despite facing significant challenges in this setting, the journey as a Pharmacist in Mpumalanga public sector was immensely rewarding. I was effective in my own way and will continuously do so. I believe my work highlighted the critical role Pharmacists plays in the public health and hope that those who come after me will nurture that legacy for the next generation of Pharmacists.





## **REKGOPETSE VICTORIA OLADIPUPO (20 FEBRUARY 1976 – 22 JULY 2024): A LIFE OF EXCELLENCE AND COMPASSION**

Rekgopetse Victoria Oladipupo, fondly remembered as "Sis Victoria," was a beacon of dedication and inspiration in her community of Arthurseat Village, Arconhoek. Born the eldest child of Mr. Rantwa Nicholas and Mrs. Baratwa Suzan Mashego, her name, meaning "God answered their prayer," perfectly encapsulated her life of service and compassion.

Victoria's remarkable journey saw her excel academically, earning two Master's degrees in Pharmacy and Industrial Engineering. Her career spanned from Letaba Hospital to Dr. George Mukhari Hospital, culminating at Tintswalo Hospital, where her leadership transformed the pharmacy and established a respected Pharmacy Intern training program. She was remembered as a mentor and mother figure by her colleagues, guiding them with love, humility, and unwavering support.

Despite her demanding career, Victoria prioritized her family – her husband, Oluwafemi Solomon Oladipupo, and their three children. She was a hands-on mother who balanced her professional success with nurturing care, embodying grace and resilience. Her mantra, "It is well," continues to inspire those she left behind.

Victoria's legacy lives on in the lives she touched, the improvements she championed, and the inspiration she provided to her family, colleagues, and community. Though her passing leaves a void, her memory remains a shining example of excellence, compassion, and faith.



## **HONORING THEIR MEMORIES**

### **ZETHU EMMELDAH KHOZA (19 APRIL 1991 – 10 MAY 2024): A LIFE OF PURPOSE AND COMPASSION**



Zethu Emmeldah Khoza's life, though brief, was one of remarkable impact. Born to Stephan and Winnie Matsana, Zethu excelled academically, earning a Pharmacy degree and later a Master's in Public Health. Her professional journey at Bernice Samuel and Rob Ferreira Hospitals was defined not just by her expertise but by her deep compassion. She went beyond dispensing medication, establishing welfare programs to provide essentials for struggling patients, embodying her unwavering commitment to serving others.

Zethu's dedication extended beyond her career. As a founding member of the NGOs MAYIM and Megalo Melon, she tirelessly worked to uplift orphans and the poor. She also mentored pharmacy students and interns, leaving behind a legacy of guidance and inspiration. Her life mirrored the story of the widow's oil jar: a vessel of compassion that poured out abundantly, touching countless lives.

Her family, especially her husband Dr Courage Khoza, whom she married in November 2019, was her anchor and greatest support. Though her passing leaves an immense void, her legacy of love, service, and resilience endures. The Khoza and Matsana families, while heartbroken, take solace in the profound impact of her life, a testament to her favorite scripture, "2 Kings 4:5-6." May her soul rest in peace.

**INNOCENTIA MAUBANE**  
PHC Pharmacist  
Victor Khanye Sub-District



# FIP BASEL STATEMENT WORKSHOP

The South African Association of Hospital and Institutional Pharmacists (SAAHIP) Mpumalanga Branch, in partnership with Pfizer, organized a transformative session focused on the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) Basel Statements on October 31, 2024. The national president of SAAHIP, Mr. Nhlanhla Mafarafara, was the guest presenter and expert on FIP Basel Statements.

The FIP Basel Statements provide a unified global vision for the future of institutional pharmacy. They aim to ensure that patients benefit from access to safe, effective, quality, and affordable medicines and health technologies, including pharmaceutical care services provided by Pharmacists in multidisciplinary settings. Developed collaboratively by experts in the field, they serve as a framework for improving pharmacy services, ensuring better patient outcomes, and fostering professional development within the pharmaceutical sector.

The workshop explored the real-world application of the FIP Basel Statements, with a focus on the South African context. Institutional hospital practices were analysed to determine the degree of alignment with the Basel Statements and identify gaps. The evaluation of current resources and practices revealed areas where institutional pharmacy in South Africa falls short in delivering optimal patient care and pharmaceutical services.

These gaps were not merely obstacles but opportunities for transformative change. The discussions from the session highlighted the impact of these gaps on patient care and service provision, inspiring brainstorming of actionable steps. Each action was linked to a specific theme of the Basel Statements, with assigned responsibilities and timelines to drive accountability.

The workshop adopted a step-by-step approach inspired by the PDSA (Plan-Do-Study-Act) Cycle, a model that



## SAAHIP MPUMALANGA

has proven highly relevant to hospital pharmacy management. Participants considered potential obstacles and limitations to implementing change and explored strategies to overcome them. This systematic approach emphasized the importance of contextualizing the Basel Statements and applying them effectively in practice. The workshop highlighted that the framework, documentation, standards are there, they just need to be put into context and applied in practice. Anyone in that room was best equipped by Mr. Mafarafara.

What made the workshop truly transformative was the diversity of its participants. It was humbling and energizing to sit among Pharmacists from across the province, each bringing unique skills, experiences, and perspectives. The room buzzed with ideas on how to mould institutional pharmacy to better serve communities. This melting pot of knowledge underscored the power of collaboration and the limitless potential of our profession when united by a shared vision.

As the workshop concluded, we were left with a thought-provoking question: "What kind of Pharmacist are you deciding to be?"

This question is not just a challenge but an invitation to shape our professional identities deliberately. Will you be a Pharmacist who innovates, advocates, leads, or teaches? Whatever the path, the Basel Statements remind us that we have the tools and frameworks to create meaningful change.

As I left the workshop, I felt a renewed sense of purpose. I am determined to not only embrace the principles of the Basel Statements but also to inspire others in our profession to do the same. Together, we can redefine what it means to be a Pharmacist in the 21st century.

### BASETSANA MAPHANGA

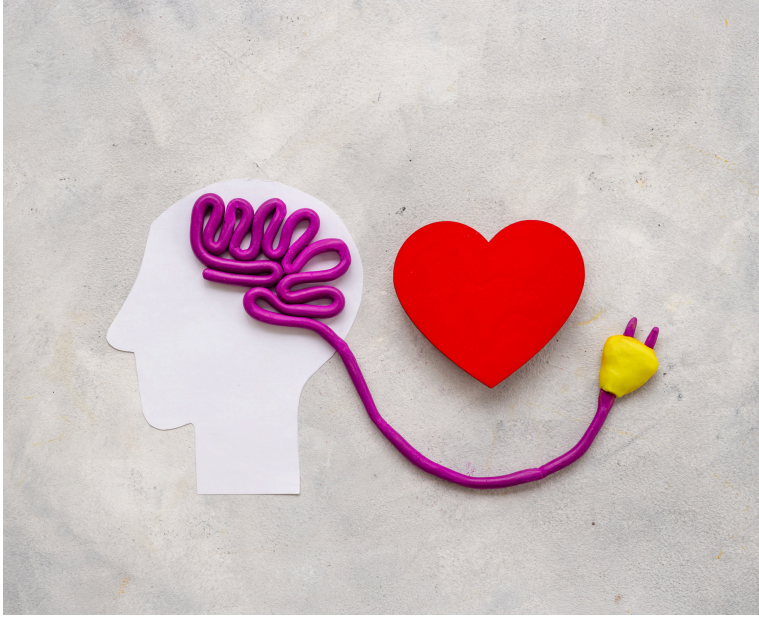
Community Service Pharmacist  
Rob Ferreira Hospital





# SURVIVING AND THRIVING

## *A Look Back at 2024's Mental Health Journey*



With 2024 behind us, it's time to pause and reflect on the rollercoaster of a year it's been — one filled with challenges, growth, and, let's face it, some downright absurd moments. Whether it was a year of breakthroughs, breakdowns, or just hanging in there, one thing is clear: mental health was THE conversation of the year. And if there's one thing South Africans have proven, it's that we're a nation of survivors — armed with resilience, determination, and a wicked sense of humour to boot.

### **The Year Mental Health Took Centre Stage**

This past year, mental health finally stepped out of the shadows and into the spotlight. From workplaces introducing wellness programs to influencers openly sharing their mental health journeys, the conversation has never been louder, more inclusive, or more necessary.

For many, 2024 was a reminder that mental health isn't just a trending hashtag — it's a lifelong journey. And this collective focus on well-being felt like the beginning of a cultural shift we've long needed.

### **The Year of the "Soft Life"**

2024 was unofficially dubbed "the year of the soft life," a movement that encouraged us to prioritize peace over perfection. Instagram feeds were flooded with affirmations like "You are enough" and photos of cozy mornings featuring healthy lifestyle choices. But behind

the filters, we came to realize that self-care isn't just about spa days and scented candles. It's about boundary-setting, therapy sessions, and, yes, finally confronting the issues we've been avoiding.

### **Lessons in Resilience**

If 2024 taught us anything, it's that resilience isn't about being unshakeable. It's about wobbling, recalibrating, and, yes, sometimes collapsing in a heap before finding your footing again.

Resilience isn't built by lounging on the couch binge-watching *Bridgerton* (though let's not underestimate its therapeutic value). It grows in the moments when life throws a metaphorical curveball straight at your face, and you either dodge, catch, or laugh about it later.

Last year tested all of us in one way or another. And yet, here we are: a little more resilient, slightly sleep-deprived, and possibly sporting a t-shirt that reads, "It's fine. I'm fine. Everything's fine."

### **Humour: The Unsung Hero of Mental Health**

It's often said that laughter is the best medicine, and 2024 was proof of that. Humour quietly worked its magic, turning panic into punchlines and bad days into amusing anecdotes.

Sure, laughter didn't fix our problems, but it made the messiness of life a little more bearable. Whether it was meme-worthy moments, witty comebacks, or those hilarious WhatsApp group chats, humour reminded us that even in chaos, there's room for joy.

### **Looking Ahead**

As we step into 2025, let's make mental health a top priority with resolutions that actually stick. Set boundaries with confidence and finesse, say no without guilt, and remember that rest is not a luxury, it's a necessity. Let's swap stress for self-care, one small, intentional choice at a time.

And while we can't promise the water crisis will magically disappear, we can promise to keep showing up for our patients—and for each other.

Here's to a new year filled with hope, healing, and a renewed commitment to our well-being. Whatever 2025 has in store, one thing is certain: we as South Africans will face it with our signature blend of courage, compassion, and humour.

**MS. KHADIJA KHAN**

Pharmacist

Bernice Samuel Hospital



# 2024 REFLECTIONS: ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH IN THE SPOTLIGHT

As we step into 2025, it's essential to reflect on the environmental health challenges that shaped 2024. The past year brought unique difficulties, hard-earned successes, and new opportunities that significantly impacted South Africa's environmental health landscape.



## ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES IN 2024

South Africa grappled with numerous environmental health challenges throughout 2024. From beaches contaminated with E.coli along South Africa's Golden Coast, to the particulate matter suspended over the Mpumalanga Highveld. However, the most alarming environmental health crisis of 2024 was the outbreak of foodborne illnesses, which tragically, led to the deaths of 22 children across Mpumalanga, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, and Limpopo. These deaths - said to be linked to contaminated food purchased from local Spaza shops - highlighted gaps in food safety and public health standards across the country.

## A CALL FOR POLICY CHANGE

The foodborne illness outbreak highlighted the critical need for inclusive food control legislation, as current regulations often overlook informal food traders in townships while favouring urban businesses. This imbalance endangers public health and marginalizes small-scale traders. Adopting inclusive policies would protect consumers and support township entrepreneurs by ensuring all food businesses meet safety standards.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR FOOD SAFETY

To reduce the risk of foodborne illnesses and promote a culture of food safety, consider these tips when buying from Spaza shops and informal food traders:

1. Access to clean water: Ensure the shop has a reliable supply of clean water for cooking, handwashing, and cleaning utensils.
2. Temperature control: Check if the shop uses cooler boxes or ice containers to store perishable items at safe temperatures.
3. Cleanliness: Look for shops that are clean, dust-free, free of chemicals, animals, and waste, with no open sewage nearby.
4. Labelling: Choose foods with proper labels that list ingredients, the product name, and manufactu-



rer details.

5. Limit leftovers: Be cautious when purchasing leftover food, and trust your senses—sight, smell, taste, and texture—to evaluate its safety.

By following these practices, communities can actively reduce the risk of foodborne illnesses and create a healthier food culture.

## MOVING FORWARD IN 2025

Reflecting on the environmental health challenges of 2024 reveals critical lessons for the future. From addressing water shortages and pollution to advocating for food safety

reforms, the journey ahead requires collaboration between policymakers, businesses, and communities.

As we enter 2025, let's commit to fostering a healthier environment—one that prioritizes clean water, safe food, and air quality. Together, we can build a sustainable future for all South Africans.

## NTIBI MOTEANE

Environmental Health Practitioner  
Bernice Samuel Hospital





# PHARMACY-WEEK IN RETROSPECT: MOMENTS THAT MADE A DIFFERENCE

Two events that particularly stood out during this year's Pharmacy-Week, which showcased Pharmacist's unwavering commitment to delivering exceptional patient-care.

We begin our story with Barberton Hospital Pharmacy, which took a proactive stance during Pharmacy-Week, championing the importance of immunization under the theme "Let's talk about vaccines" the team made a lasting impact. We had the privilege of engaging with the Pharmacy Manager, who shared with us the meticulous preparations and outstanding work that made this year's celebrations truly unforgettable. Here's his insightful reflection on the highlights of Pharmacy-Week at Barberton Hospital. - Ms. N.G. MASEKO



The month of September is regarded as Pharmacy-Month in South Africa, with the 25th of being celebrated as global Pharmacists Day. The theme for the year 2024 was "Let's Talk About Vaccines". When this theme was introduced, we saw an opportunity to educate communities as well as healthcare professionals about the importance of vaccinations, and how they should be handled.

Vaccines play a vital role in the pharmacy profession, encompassing critical aspects such as cold-chain management and the Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI) which applies to all individuals in South Africa, not only healthcare professionals.

Given the scale of the task ahead, we realised that achieving our goal would require collaborative effort. We then proactively pursued strategic partnerships and sponsorship opportunities to ensure the successful implementation of our vision.

We reached out to the National Union of Public Service and Allied Workers (NUPSAW) for a collaboration in carrying out the vision we had. The chairperson for NUPSAW at Barberton Hospital, Ms. H.P Khoza who is also a Basic Pharmacist Assistant was very instrumental





in procuring the sponsorship on our behalf. Once we got the sponsorship, we then started implementing the vision that we had for Pharmacy-Month 2024.

Pamphlets were created by our dedicated Community-Service Pharmacist, Ms. J. Prinsloo in collaboration with other pharmacy staff-members. These pamphlets were going to be used during all the outreaches that were planned.

The concept was to run a health awareness program in departmental units as well as the outpatient department, focusing on the importance of vaccinations. Every Friday until the end of September; we aimed to educate healthcare professionals and patients alike, distributing informative pamphlets to reinforce our message. Additionally, we scheduled visits to two local schools in the surrounding area namely; Fairview Primary School and Funwako Secondary School.

In closing Pharmacy-Month, we had planned to have the main event hosted at Barberton Hospital on Pharmacy Day the 25th of September 2024, with lunch being served to thank all the stakeholders who assisted during the month-long activities. NUPSAW sponsored us with branded pens and pencils for the learners that we visited, they also sponsored us with T-shirts for all pharmacy staff, clinics and Department of Correctional Services (DCS) for the outreaches. Due to the high visibility of the team and the ma-



ny activities that were going on, we ended up being invited by Ms. P Myanga-Ndlovu, the Responsible Pharmacist (RP) at DCS to be part of the annual DCS Pharmacy-Month celebrations where presentations were given to offenders. We were also fortunate to be invited to Ligwalgwala FM's breakfast show on World Pharmacy-Day to speak about the year's theme and everything related to Pharmacy. I, Mr. S.G Makwakwa, the RP for Barberton Hospital honoured the invitation and explained in detail what Pharmacy-Month is all about.

Pharmacy-Month was then closed off with an amazing lunch for the Modipane, Dr. B Nkuna, Dr. P.J.C.A Mbizi, Occupational Health Nurse Sr.



N.V Fakude as well as the Finance Manager Ms. D.G Koen. All this was done to appreciate the pharmacy staff for their hard work and dedication during Pharmacy-Month. One of the Pharmacists Mr. S.E Shekwa also sponsored the team with a hand baked cake as part of the Pharmacy-Month festivities. Overall it was an eventful month for Barberton Hospital Pharmacy and 2025 promises to be an even better one with more stakeholders already being engaged for collaborations.

**MR. S. MAKWAKWA**  
Pharmacy Manager  
Barberton Hospital







## MOMENTS THAT MADE A DIFFERENCE

*Moving on to the second notable event, we witnessed a fascinating convergence of pharmacovigilance and traditional medicine. This unique event brought together experts from diverse backgrounds to explore the intersections and opportunities for collaboration between these fields.*

This event was proposed by Ms. Tryphosa Mashawana, a Primary Health Care (PHC) Pharmacist serving at Siphosensimbi CHC which falls under Emalahleni Local Municipality. Seeking to bridge the gap between conventional medicine and traditional medicine practices, she envisioned an event for Pharmacy-Day that would foster greater understanding and collaboration between these groups.

After consulting with Mr. Ndumiso Mdhuli, Nkangala District Pharmacist. Ms. Mashawana was advised to establish a committee to help expand the event and engage more health and traditional practitioners, recognising the initiative's uniqueness and potential. Consequently, a four-member committee was formed to support the initiative which was inclusive of the following members;

- Ms. Mamolefe Selokela; African Traditional Program Manager at Mpumalanga Provincial Office
- Ms. Nothando Khoza; Pharmaceutical Services Program Support, CCMDD & Pharmacovigilance

Assistant Manager

- Mr. Ndumiso Mdhuli; Nkangala District Pharmacist
- Ms. Ncobile Maseko; Pharmacist

The committee members brought diverse expertise and expectations to the table, which include knowledge of African traditional medicine, pharmacovigilance and patient care within the health sector. The initial event was slated to take place at a Siphosensimbi CHC. However, due to safety concerns at the time, it was deemed advisable to relocate the event to a different facility, hence Middleburg Hospital was chosen. With the assistance of the Hospital's Pharmacy Manager, Ms. Marlize Jacobs, all necessary arrangements were done.

The event was held on 27 September 2024, bringing together healthcare specialists, traditional healers, and alternative medicines promoters for this unique, first-of-its kind gathering. Green-World and Masephula health product representatives honoured the invitation to showcase their products to the community.





The celebration, which aimed to educate community members about the diverse range of medicines available, promoted transparency and open communication about alternative medicine use by patient to health providers, fostering a culture of trust and cooperation.

Recognizing that health encompasses more than just physical well-being, traditional medicines also plays a vital role in connecting people to their ethnic heritage and spiritual well-being. Therefore, by bridging the gap that currently exist, we can create a more inclusive and supportive healthcare system.

This collaborative approach can enable healthcare systems to better understand, trust, and support each other. As patients feel empowered to disclose their use of alternative medicines, accurate and timely reporting of adverse reactions will significantly improve pharmacovigilance efforts.

The event featured esteemed speakers from the health sector, who shared their experiences with various treatment options and explored potential future collaborations. African traditional health workers, supported by Mamolefe, the African Traditional Program Manager in the province, have made significant strides.



Currently, African traditional healers undergo trainings offered by the Department, where they get skilled on practices such as taking blood pressure, recognizing contraindications - like not steaming patients with elevated blood pressure - and understanding the importance of not treating TB patients while on conventional treatment. They can also refer patients to Primary Health Care facilities, demonstrating their commitment to collaborative and effective healthcare. This engagement was truly enlightening, highlighting that there is room for all health workers to come together, collaborate, and prioritize their shared goal of delivering exceptional patient care.

We greatly acknowledge the sponsorship of **Dr Temp, Hetero Health Bambanani Pharmacy, Bongani Rainmaker**

**NCOBILE MASEKO**  
Pharmacist  
Bernice Samuel Hospital



# FUN IN THE SUN:

A DAY OF LAUGHTER AND FRIENDLY COMPETITION AT BERNICE SAMUEL HOSPITAL



To welcome the vibrant days of summer, Bernice Samuel Hospital Pharmacy organized a lively event called *Fun in the Sun*, offering staff members a chance to unwind and embrace the warmer weather. What unfolded was a truly memorable day filled with laughter, camaraderie, and spirited competition!

## A Hilarious Start: The Caterpillar Race

The day kicked off with the uproarious caterpillar race, where teams of five had to traverse a set distance while holding a balloon between their bodies—no hands allowed! The race quickly descended into a hilarious mix of chaos and inventive strategies, with no clear winner emerging amidst the laughter and good-natured “cheating.”

## The Coke/Fanta Challenge: A Test of Reflexes

Next up was the Coke/Fanta Challenge, a game that tested participants' agility and reflexes. A line was drawn on the ground, with a bottle of Fanta on one side and Coke on the other. Players stood along the line, and when one of the drinks was called out, they had to jump to the correct side. Those who jumped incorrectly were eliminated. The game sparked plenty of laughs as players stumbled and scrambled, trying to keep up. Ultimately, Innocentia Maubane from the pharmacy team claimed victory, standing as the last player on the field.

## The Amazing Race: A Thrilling Finale

The highlight of the day was undoubtedly the Amazing Race. Teams raced across the hospital, solving clues in a bid to cross the finish line first. After an exhilarating chase, the winning team—comprising Dr. Claudia Linde-Smith, Dr. Tiffney Ortell, Mr. Clinton Hlophe, Mr. Thokozani Shabangu and Mack (Ms. Cornelia van der Linde's son)—emerged triumphant. Their teamwork and determination were truly inspiring!

*Fun in the Sun* was a resounding success, reminding everyone of the importance of connection and laughter in the workplace. Events like these not only boost morale but also strengthen the bonds between staff members, making Bernice Samuel Hospital a truly special place to work.

**KHADIJA KHAN**

Pharmacist

Bernice Samuel Hospital

