

The SANC unveils **WALL OF REMEMBRANCE** in honour of Nurses who passed away in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic

On Wednesday 29 March 2023, the SANC hosted the unveiling of the Wall of Remembrance in honour of Nurses who passed away in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

Guests from across South Africa as well as journalists attended the unveiling event, all unified by the sacrifices made by these Nurses.

History

In 2020 the world was thrown into its biggest crisis in more than a hundred years with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since the first case was registered in South Africa on 05 March 2020, the figures have spiralled out of control registering 4,06 million cases and 103 000 deaths¹.

While the country, like the rest of the world, went into a firm lockdown and people could stay safe at home with their families, it was the health professionals who were serving in the midst of this crisis, trying everything possible to save lives of patients that they came into contact with. The fight against the pandemic was often at great cost to themselves and their families. Yet we were consistently faced with stories of Nurses' compassion, selfless acts, courage and dedication in the midst of this crisis.



Nursing, the noble profession

Nursing is a noble profession which requires the highest degree of professionalism, dedication and care. The health system cannot function without Nurses as its backbone. But the stress that Nurses work under daily cannot be under-estimated, and never was it more true than during this pandemic.

1: <https://github.com/CSSEGISandData/COVID-19>

2: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2772707622001096>

Wall of Remembrance

The South African Nursing Council, regulator of the Nursing profession, has subsequently built a Wall of Remembrance on its premises to honour these fallen heroes and pay tribute to those Nurses who have passed away during the pandemic.

Says Prof. Ntombi Mtshali, SANC Registrar and CEO: ***"They have fought the pandemic displaying immeasurable courage and strength, and served the Nation and their patients with impeccable dedication, loyalty and unselfishness. They are the true unsung heroes of the pandemic – we salute them. They have not been forgotten and with this Wall erected in their honour, they never will be."***



Left: Deputy Minister of Health: Dr S Dhlomo
Right: The SANC Chairperson: Dr MC Molepo





The Deputy Minister of Health, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo

The Chief Nursing Officer
Dr. Nonhlanhla Makhanya

Ministry of Health attended

The Deputy Minister of Health, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo and the Chief Nursing Officer Dr. Nonhlanhla Makhanya also attended the unveiling.

The Deputy Minister is quoted below:

I feel honoured to deliver a memorial speech on this special day to unveil the Wall of Remembrance erected by the South African Nursing Council in honour of our nursing colleagues who demised like soldiers with their boots on during the pandemic.

Allow me to extend my deepest condolences to the families, friends, colleagues, and communities whose loved ones. Just like those who fought for hard to liberate this country from the chains of brutal apartheid regime, let us not forget the selfless Nurses who courageously put the lives of our citizens first when they became the first line of defence to protect us.

When most employers allowed their workers choose to work from home due to fear of contracting and spreading Coronavirus during the peak of the pandemic, unfortunately South African Nightingales or Nurses just like other essential workers, did not have that luxury to work from home due to the nature of their job. They had only one option that is to face the hungry lion.

They had to take a risk and face the monster in order save the lives of our people, not because they were immune from the virus nor there were children of a lesser God, but because they committed to:

- Be loyal to an oath they took when they join this profession.
 - Solemnly pledged themselves to the service of humanity and committed to endeavour to practice the profession with conscience and with dignity
 - To the total health of their patients would remain their first consideration
 - Maintain the utmost response for human life.
- Programme Director - Thus, let's remember these fallen heroes and heroines with pride this because they rolled up their sleeves and confronted the ever-mutating pandemic during the various waves.

Many of them got infected and had to isolate themselves. Whilst some of the health care workers recovered, a significant number regrettably succumbed to death, and they are now part of the statistical number of 102 595.

Nurses are a bedrock of our health care system, it is even sad for the country as we prepare to implement the National Health Insurance as part of efforts to achieve the Universal Health Coverage to ensure equal access to affordable and quality healthcare for all citizens irrespective of their socioeconomic status, simply because the diseases have no status and discrimination.

The success implementation of the NHI will depend on the Nurses amongst the cohorts of health workers. I am saying this because, though doctors also play an instrumental role in the success of the hospital environment by making key decisions pertaining to patient medical diagnosis and treatment, but Nurses are another important component in the healthcare wheel.

Nurses are often the unsung and underappreciated heroes and heroines of the health care sector, despite what they endure during difficult times like the unforgettable COVID-19 era.

This was a period that was filled with uncertainty, anxiety, loss of hope and fatigue. There is no doubt that the pandemic hit the country when it was least expected, when the readiness of health facilities to manage such an overwhelming pandemic was a challenge, especially in rural districts of the country.

However, Nurses found themselves at the forefront of demonstrating a leadership role in crisis management. The four-fold role of professional Nurses was highly visible during this period. Utilising a multi-disciplinary, nurse led approach became the best solution in the effective management of COVID-19 pandemic.

Programme Director – it is undeniable fact that the COVID-19 pandemic brought challenges to both public and private health sectors as the country experienced a pandemic of unprecedented magnitude. The health system had to be prepared in real time for multitudes of admissions to intensive care units and general wards in hospitals.

The system experienced an avalanche of patients. The already constrained health system had to care for many acutely ill patients, exacerbating the limited resources even further. But at the forefront of saving lives were Nurses who made sacrifices under difficult and impossible conditions to save patient's lives at the cost of their own health and safety.

They took care or responded to the needs of the patients while following the rules, regulations, ethics and standard of nursing, while working in the isolation units or intensive care units with COVID-19 patients, Nurses had to ensure provision of quality care to the patients while taking care of themselves.



The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the mental health and well-being of Nurses and other health care workers, as they treat patients, they also grappled with their own heightened exposure to COVID-19 infection, loss of colleagues and patients they cared for, which resulted in mental health stress.

Burn-out became a daily reality for them during the pandemic as there was an increasing concern about the impact of post-traumatic stress disorder amongst them. Thus, we have got the responsibility to ensure that supporting the psychological wellbeing of the Nurses and other health workers continues to be our priority beyond the pandemic.

I would like to commend the South African Nursing Council for taking the initiative and adjusting its operations and regulations as a way of appreciating and valuing the country's Nurses' and Midwives' commitment and sacrifice at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We will be amiss not to recognise the SANC and its Council's contribution to the national response to COVID-19 pandemic which include:

- A progressive and sound decision to restore for free, those Nurses who wanted restoration into the Nurse Register for the sole purpose of rendering services and helping in the prevention of the spread of COVID-19.
- The resolution to waiver annual fees increases for the year 2021/2022.
- The restructuring of statutory requirements of student nurse training affected by the national lockdown so that students could still meet the theoretical and work integrated learning requirements.
- The issuing of supportive guidelines regarding the impact of Coronavirus outbreak on Nursing Education and Training on managing interrupted teaching and learning activities.

Programme Director - At this momentous occasion, let us also take this opportunity to remember the "Group of 20 Nurses" who were recruited by the African National Congress, at the behest of Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere in 1961, to help revive nursing in post-independent state Tanzania. The 20 Nurses heeded the call and made the voyage to Tanzania in 1961 at a time when the country faced a nursing crisis after British Rule ended.

We salute them for being ready to serve the diaspora. Just last week we had the honour of welcoming home the mortal remains of one of these self-less Nurses, Sister Kholeka Tunyiswa, who passed on at the age of 87 and was repatriated to South Africa. We are working with the Department of Sports, Arts and Culture on the plan to dedicate commemoration of the 2023 International Nurses Day to celebrate the lives and selfless contribution of the 20 Nightingales.

In conclusion, the health care system will never be same without the fallen heroes and heroines who we are remembering today, tomorrow and forever.

My message to all South African Nurses – You do more than merely looking after patients while on treatment; but you are life savers."



THE SANC

appoints new Registrar and CEO

Prof NG Mtshali
Registrar and CEO

The South African Nursing Council (SANC) is pleased to announce the appointment of Prof Ntombifikile Mtshali as the Registrar and CEO of the South African Nursing Council. The appointment is made by the Honourable Minister of Health Dr MJ Phaahla, in terms of Section 18(1) and (3) of the Nursing Act, 2005 (Act No. 33 of 2005) with effect from 01 March 2023.

Professor Mtshali is a recognised Nurse leader, academic and researcher who brings a wealth of experience and knowledge with her including a PhD from the University of KwaZulu-Natal and extensive leadership experience in higher education.

Prior to the current position, she served as the Head of the Nursing Department at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), Director of the World Health Organisation Collaborating Centre (WHOCC) for Nursing and Midwifery at UKZN, Dean of Teaching and Learning in the College of Health at UKZN, Senior Manager Education and Training at the SANC as well as Lecturer and Associate Professor at UKZN. She served as the Manager of the International Centre for AIDS Care and Treatment Programs (ICAP) at Columbia University Nursing Education Partnership Initiative (NEPI) in South Africa.

During this period, she was seconded to the office of the Chief Nursing Officer in the National Department of Health, to provide technical support to public Nursing colleges (PNC) that served as a pilot site for the integration of PNC to the higher education initiative.

This initiative included developing and pilot-testing the country's first National Policy on Nursing Education and Training.

In support of the WHO agenda Prof Mtshali provided technical support to Nursing Education Institutions in Congo Brazzaville, DRC, Eritrea, Lesotho, Rwanda, Seychelles, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Rwanda and Tanzania in developing and implementing competency-based curricula, and in building the capacity of Nurses educators as a visiting Professor.

The South African Nursing Council welcomes Prof Mtshali and wishes her every success in her new tenure.

Council on Higher Education and South African Nursing Council Joint Communique on access to the Postgraduate Diplomas in Nursing



Council on Higher Education and South African Nursing Council
Joint Communique on access to the Postgraduate Diplomas in Nursing
17 March 2023

Extensive engagements with the nursing education sector, including engagements facilitated by the Nursing Education Quad, a collective body with senior representation from the Department of Health, the Department of Higher Education and Training, the South African Nursing Council and the Council on Higher Education, have taken place to discuss the challenges to access posed by the articulation routes from legacy nursing qualifications to the Postgraduate Diplomas in Nursing communicated in the CHE's Communiqué 10 of 2022.

The discussions also took place in the context of the need to respond to the growing challenge around the availability of specialist nurses, and the need for qualified professional nurses and midwives to access the Postgraduate Diplomas in Nursing in order to become qualified as Nurse or Midwife Specialists.

A consultative workshop with a community of experts was convened on 14 February 2023 at which the following organisations were represented: Department of Health (DoH), Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), South African Nursing Council (SANC), Council on Higher Education (CHE), Forum of University Nursing Deans of South Africa (FUNDISA), College Principals and Academic Staff of South Africa (CPASSA), NETCARE, Life HealthCare, Mediclinic and Private Health Education Providers of South Africa (PHEPSA).

The strong recommendation emanating from the stakeholder engagement was that as the country is in a period of transition as nursing education fully migrates to the higher education sector and that historical pathways that enabled the development of Nurse or Midwife Specialists need to be recognized. In the interests of ensuring that a sufficient number of specialist nurses are available for the health sector in the country, nurses who hold legacy qualifications that previously enabled them to access specialist studies should be allowed to access the Postgraduate Diplomas in Nursing. The Quad endorsed this recommendation and a formal letter from SANC also supported the recommendation.

The CHE's Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) considered the recommendation at its meeting on 13 March 2023, and resolved that a special concession is put in place as follows:

Council on Higher Education and South African Nursing Council Joint Communique on access to the Postgraduate Diplomas in Nursing

Postgraduate Diploma in Nursing: The Postgraduate Diploma (PGDip) in Nursing is the qualification through which specialist nurses are developed. These are nurses who are already registered as Professional Nurses and Midwives, or a General Nurse with a Midwifery Qualification. After 1986, these nurses would have historically followed one of the following three legacy qualification routes, which on completion and with experience, enabled nurses to be admitted to specialist studies:

- 2-year Diploma (Bridging course) leading to registration as General or Psychiatric Nurse offered under Regulation 683 of 14 April 1989 as amended, followed by 1-year Diploma in Midwifery offered under Regulation 254 of 14 February 1975 as amended.

OR

- 4-year Diploma in Nursing and Midwifery offered under Regulation 425 of 22 February 1985 as amended.

OR

- 4-year Bachelor's Degree offered under Regulation R425 of 22 February 1985 as amended.

In addition to the minimum requirements for admission to the PGDip described on page 35 of the HEQSF (CHE, 2013) as follows: "The minimum admission requirements is an appropriate Bachelor's degree or an appropriate Advanced Diploma", Nursing Education Institutions offering the PGDip in Nursing can also consider applicants who have followed the three legacy routes above for admission to the PGDip in Nursing.

Institutions offering the PGDip in Nursing must take cognizance of the diverse qualifications routes that students have followed and put appropriate measures in place to support students, including addressing content and skills gaps where these may exist.


In the light of the special concession above, it should be noted that the articulation pathways described in decisions 5, 6 and 7 of the CHE's Communique 10 of 2022 are no longer necessary.

The HEQC further required that the access and progression of nurses from the legacy qualifications into and through the PGDip be closely monitored by the CHE, SANC, the DoH and the DHET, to address any challenges that may arise, and to advise the HEQC when the special concession is no longer required.

The CHE and the SANC are grateful for the strong collaboration and commitment to working together that enabled this decision to be reached, and the organisations look forward to continuing positive collaboration in the interests of ensuring the availability of sufficient quality nurses and nursing specialists for the health sector in South Africa.



Dr W Green
Chief Executive Officer
Council on Higher Education



Prof. NG Mtshali
Registrar and Chief Executive Officer
South African Nursing Council



THEME: THE FUTURE OF NURSING

DATE: 18 - 19 MAY 2023

**Virtual Nursing Indaba registration will be open
on 02 May 2023:**

www.sanc.co.za/registration



Please note that although it is an online conference, space is limited to 1 000 delegates.



PLEASE NOTE: Delegates who have registered for the physical conference will not be affected by this online registration and thus they do not need to register again.