LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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Warm Welcome to the Department of Surgery in the Department of Health Province of Limpopo

Introduction

Surgical challenges in rural areas are very well documented. The vast geographic area covered by the Province of Limpopo is no exception. What is different in Limpopo is that the Provincial Administration has demonstrated a great interest and commitment in developing excellent health care for all its citizens albeit from a rather low base.

Recently it supported the growth and diversification of the various Surgical Services in the province and new surgical departments are being established while the existing departments are undergoing significant growth.

One of the key components of raising the bar for surgical specialties is close collaboration to advance the academic project with the University of Limpopo.

The Medical School of Limpopo is the latest established and newest of the 9 Medical Schools in South Africa. Needless to say, tremendous challenges had to be overcome to establish such a Medical School. In spite of humble beginnings, the Medical School currently graduates now approximately 100 Medical Doctors annually.

About half of these are “home-grown” MBChBs; the other half are graduates from the Nelson Mandela – Fidel Castro Initiative. The last group receive their first 4 undergraduate study years in Cuba (and in the Spanish language!), where after they

come to Limpopo in order to become introduced into and get acquainted with clinical medicine. The Department of Health in Limpopo is very proud with the progress made over the last decade; the Healthcare Professional Council of South Africa just having recently (August 2021) finalized their 5-year visitation to the University of Limpopo for accreditation of the Medical Programmes. In the light of these developments, we judged it timely and appropriate to document a number of achievements of the General Surgical Department in Limpopo. This Website of the Department covers the following sections:

- The *First part* provides a brief overview of the Medical School and the Department of Surgery in Limpopo.
- The *Second part* provides details on the Structure of the Department and the Specialist Staff employed.
- The *Third part* provides an abbreviated Annual Report 2021.
- The *Fourth part* provides a list of Academic Achievements and Output of the Surgical Departmental during 2021.

The last part will provide our contact details.

The Addendum includes the Special Issue of the SAMJ from November 2021 with the title: ”Surgical Challenges in Limpopo”.

1. Overview of the Department of Surgery in Limpopo

It is no secret that there has been a paucity of medical care facilities in rural areas. In 1978 the Medical University of South Africa (Medunsa) was established to alleviate this situation by its main aim of training black doctors, dentists and other health professionals; at that time over 90% of medical personal were white.
Ga-Rankuwa Hospital (currently the Dr George Mukhari Hospital) was established in 1973 but was converted to an Academic Center and the University's first teaching hospital in 1978; at the time it consisted of 39 wards and had over 2000 beds, making it the second largest hospital in the Southern Hemisphere.
Although academic publications were limited, the Department of Surgery established its name in the fields of thyroid and peptic ulcer disease in particular black patients.
Under significant duress and as part of a nationwide restructuring, Medunsa entered a forced but brief marriage with the University of the North (Currently the University of Limpopo) whereby both Pietersburg and Mankweng became established academic satellite hospitals. At that time there were only 2 general surgeons working in Polokwane, the other surgical specialties were not represented.
Pietersburg Hospital dates back to the Anglo-Boer war when a military hospital (consisting mainly of corrugated iron) was established to treat soldiers; however, women and children were also accommodated in their own hospital wards. In 1927 finally a permanent and well-equipped hospital was built and opened. The geographic challenges were already early recognized and after xome lobbying, the International Red Cross donated its first ambulance, a 1929 Chevrolet Model:



The current Pietersburg hospital opened in 1978; followed by the opening of the Mankweng Hospital in 1988. There have been many illustrious Heads of Department in General Surgery, but Prof Machowski (1996 – 2007) needs special mention. He was responsible for elevating the Department of General Surgery in a truly academic

fashion, focussing on a rigorous teaching and learning programme and a strong research and scientific publication count. He published over 50 articles over the duration of half a century from 1967 till 2017.

Currently, the Limpopo Academic Complex has 6 full-time specialists in General Surgery, with 2 foreign qualified consultants (MO3), 4 Surgical Registrars and 13 Medical Officers as well as 16 interns. This department annually performs approximately 2000 surgical procedures and performs approximately 4500 surgical consultations; performs over 500 minor procedures in a day-case unit and receives referrals from 43 other hospitals, and drains a large geographic area in Limpopo with over 6 million inhabitants. In additions, it provides teaching for registrars and general doctors, and it performs research and outreach for all Limpopo's hospitals. Over the last 10 years it published 15 peer-reviewed academic manuscripts and managed to deliver over 50 academic papers on national and international congresses.

Plans for a brand-new Academic Complex to be built in the near future have been approved; the new Complex will harbour 16 state-of-the-art Operating Theatres and hopefully accommodate at least 10 full-time General Surgeons. The Department of General Surgery has recently submitted its application with the Health Professional Council of South Africa to double the number of registrars from 8 to 16. We are hopeful this request is granted, paving the way for Polokwane to become a fertile training ground for the new generation of General Surgeons in South Africa. A new Medical School to be constructed on sight next to the hospital complex is currently planned by the University of Limpopo:



2. Surgical Staff and Organogram of the Department of Surgery in Limpopo



The current Surgical Staff complement at Limpopo Academic Health Complex is as follows:

Prof AB van As, HOCD, Pietersburg Hospital
Prof MMZU Bhuiyan, HOCU, Mankweng Hospital
Dr M Tun, Gastro-Enterology Unit, Pietersburg Hospital
Dr N Latakgomo, General Surgery, Pietersburg Hospital
Dr L Jonas, Breast and Endocrine Unit, Pietersburg Hospital
Dr M Phakula, General Surgery, Pietersburg Hospital
Dr T Gvilia, HPB and Endocrine Unit, Pietersburg Hospital
Dr L Mogase, Vascular Unit, Pietersburg Hospital
Dr L Tormo, Vascular Unit, Pietersburg Hospital
Dr K Mongwe, Mankweng Hospital

3. Annual Report 2021 Department of General Surgery

Development of a truly Academic Department

Since the beginning of 2021 we have been able to reinforce and strengthen the Department of Surgery, School of Medicine, Health Science Faculty, University of Limpopo, in numerous ways. The core of any Department are its professional staffing. We were grateful to extend our Department with fresh blood; very senior as well as junior staff:

- New Specialists
  - Dr Latakgomo (Fellow of American Association of Surgeons)
  - Dr Phakula (Basic Surgical Skill Course)
  - Dr Mogase (Best Vascular Exam)
  - Dr Mongwe
  - Dr Gvilia (awaiting registration with HPCSA)
- Registrars:
  - Dr Mashaba
  - Dr Monama
  - Interviewed another 5 Registrars (Waiting for approval from Administration)
  - 4 more applications for Registrar posts

We are also very grateful for the establishment of a number of new Clinical and Academic Surgical Units:

- Vascular Unit (Dr Mogase; Dr Tormo)
- GIT (Dr Tun)
- ICU/Care Unit (still in development)

Our Department was invited for the first time to the Surgical Registrar Conference in Stellenbosch, Western Cape:

- Dr Daswa presented 2 papers
- Dr Sithole presented 2 papers

The presentations from our Registrars were very well received at this national forum and will go a long way integrating our Surgical Training nationally.
The Department of Surgery was also able to develop a consistent Outreach Programme for Surgical Procedures to 2 peripheral hospitals; each one has an Operating List every second week.
The fruits of building a more academic Department show from our scholarly achievements:

4. Academic Achievements 2021

Scholarly Presentations (18 in Total):

- 4 Presentations at the Surgical Registrar Conference in Stellenbosch
- 3 Research Papers at the Limpopo Health Department Research Days
- 1 Presentation at a National Conference (SAMA)
- 10 presentations at the University of Limpopo Research Days.
    - The Department bagged 2 Prizes (Dr Seshoene & Prof Bhuiyan)

Scholarly Publications (18 in Total):

17 Peer-reviewed publication:

- Does 'Shaken baby syndrome'occur in South Africa? A review of emergency room and inquest records in Cape Town. FMG Mattes, VS Chibambo, KC Nefdt… - … Children and Youth …, 2021 - Taylor & Francis
- Audit of surgical specialty patients and beds at Pietersburg Hospital, Limpopo Province, South Africa in 2021. R Mavhungu, L Jonas, AB Van As - South African Medical Journal, 2021 - samj.org.za
- Audit of surgical procedures in regional and central hospitals in Limpopo Province, South Africa. S Ngwenya, R Mavhungu, MK Mokwena… - South African Medical …, 2021 - samj.org.za
- Retrosternal goitre at Pietersburg Hospital, Limpopo Province, South Africa: A case report. T Gvilia, L Jonas, AB Van As - South African Medical Journal, 2021 - samj.org.za
- Portal vein injury due to blunt abdominal trauma. N Ramathavha, AB van As - South African Medical Journal, 2021 - samj.org.za
- Child abuse and/or osteogenesis imperfecta? The challenging management of patients with unclear diagnosis. JP Nieke, AB Van As - South African Medical Journal, 2021 - journals.co.za
- Tracheal injury in a toddler. E Motloung, S Mapholi, AB van As - South African Medical Journal, 2021 - samj.org.za
- Laparoscopic repair of pericardio-diaphragmatic rupture: A case report. ML Phakula, MN Latakgomo, AB van As - South African Medical Journal, 2021 - samj.org.za
- Surgical challenges in Limpopo. AB Van As, TF Mhlongo - South African Medical Journal, 2021 - samj.org.za
- Governments' Responses to the Coronavirus Pandemic clears the Road for their Responses to the Traffic Pandemic. Social and Health Sciences 2020. 149-156. (https://www.samrc.ac.za/content/social-and-health-sciences-journal)
- Repeat Injuries in childhood. SAMJ 2020; 110(12): 1218-1225. (http://dx.doi.org/10.7196/samj.2020.v110i12.14546)

- Profile of patients seen at Pietersburg and Mankweng breast cancer clinics in Limpopo. R Mavhungu, M Bhuiyan, F Ooko - South African Medical Journal, 2021 - samj.org.za
- Adenomyoepithelioma of the breast: A rare case from the Mankweng Hospital breast oncology clinic, Limpopo Province, South Africa. LC Makhuvha, M Bhuiyan - South African Medical Journal, 2021 - samj.org.za
- Micropapillary carcinoma of the breast: A case review at Mankweng Hospital breast oncology clinic in Limpopo Province, South Africa. JG Mthembu, M Bhuiyan - South African Medical Journal, 2021 - samj.org.za
- Advanced breast cancer in a case of Down syndrome: Presenting a rare occurrence from Mankweng Hospital breast oncology clinic, Limpopo Province, South Africa. JG Mthembu, M Bhuiyan - South African Medical Journal, 2021 - samj.org.za
- Profile of molecular subtyping of breast cancer and clinicopathological features in Mankweng Hospital breast oncology clinic, Limpopo Province, South Africa. JG Mthembu, M Bhuiyan - South African Medical Journal, 2021 - samj.org.za
- Tongue granuloma: An unusual complication of potassium permanganate ingestion. E Motloung, N Mashaba - South African Medical Journal, 2021 - samj.org.za

Book Chapters:

- Childhood Injuries. Chapter. In: Child Health for All. 6th Edition. 2021. Oxford University Press. ISBN 9780190758479.

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