

The Rural Doctor of the year for 2008 is Dr Munyadziwa Kwindu. Dr Kwindu has been working in Donald Fraser Hospital in Limpopo since his community service 5 years ago. He has been the clinical manager for the last 4 years and has improved the services provided by the team of doctors to the district.



Kwindu says being the youngest clinical manager – previously called superintendent – in Limpopo is a huge challenge. “I have to lead by example at all times,” he says. He says among the perks of being a rural doctor is that the hospital takes care of all his accommodation needs. This allows him more time with his accountant wife Radelani (27) and son Ndinai (2).

Kwindu is also vice-chairperson of the Senior Hospital Doctors Association of South Africa; a board member of the South African Medical Association; a board member of Worship House, an emerging gospel group based in Shayandima near Thohoyandou and he is also busy finishing his masters degree in family medicine through the University of Limpopo.

He insists that his background is not that different from that of most South Africans. He’s the 11th child in a family of 15 and his late father had two wives. “I was raised by a pensioner and my mum was a housewife. You know, at matric my marks were not good enough to be admitted into medical school,” he says. So to achieve his dream of becoming a doctor – the first in his family – he took a detour. Kwindu enrolled for a Bachelor of Science degree at the University of Venda. After three years of studying and a good recommendation from his lecturers, he was accepted at the then University of Natal’s medical school.

After graduating in 2003 he was posted to Fraser Hospital. As luck would have it, just six months into his junior post he was recommended as a possible replacement to a retiring clinical manager. “With the grace of God I got the post and in July 2004 I was appointed the youngest clinical manager in the province,” he says. Fraser’s chief executive, Khuthala Maholwana, says: “When I appointed him as clinical manager I was taking a huge gamble as he had just completed his internship and community service. Regrets for my decision? I have none,” she says.

“The average age among our doctors is 36. These young people are dedicated and willing to go the extra mile for this community. We were not shocked when Kwindu was voted the best rural doctor as he’s an outstanding individual.” Maholwana says before Kwindu’s appointment patients used to complain about soiled linen, bad food, dirty toilets, boredom and unfriendly staff but that has since changed for the better.

Kwindu says: “When I was appointed, the strategy was to serve our community with dignity and care. We have this motto – shoulder to shoulder caring for you 100%.”

Looking around the hospital it's easy to see that Kwindi's passion and management style have made the atmosphere in this hospital the exception to the rule. We are taken aback by just how clean and magnificent this hospital is.

Source: S'THEMBISO HLONGWANE

Taking healing to the poor

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