

To whom it may concern,

Re: Nomination for Thandi Conradie for RuReSa Rural Rehab Healthcare worker of the year

My name is Dr Stuart Poole. I am a medical officer from Madwaleni Hospital and I, along with Rone Osche (OT, Madwaleni Hospital), Duncan Miller (Physiotherapist, Zithulele Hospital) and Helena Langenhoven (OT, Zithulele) would like to nominate Thandi Conradie for the Rural Rehab Healthcare Worker of the Year.

Thandi is a physiotherapist who has been serving the community surrounding Madwaleni Hospital for almost seven years now. She arrived in 2012 to a hospital with very few doctors and a fluctuating rehab team, mostly made up of visiting foreign rehabs. At the time, the team was sharing a small room between all the therapists, making patient care very difficult.

It feels almost impossible to summarise the work that Thandi has done in the last six years for Madwaleni, the surrounding community and the nearby hospitals, but we will do our best.

Opening of Siyaphila (inpatient rehabilitation ward)

In 2014, some space was found at Madwaleni Hospital that included 5 full size patient wards next to each other. Thandi and her colleague Katy Miller immediately saw the potential for this space and fought to secure the space for the rehab team, opening up the now well known Siyaphila ward (meaning "We are well"). Siyaphila ward is now a fully functional rehab unit, with separate rooms for physiotherapists, occupational therapists and speech therapists.

It also consists of two inpatient wards that allow for regular rehab admissions to the hospital for block therapy: a proven evidence based approach that allows for much improved outcomes in our rural setting. Patients are booked and admitted for one to two week stays where they are seen by the doctor, nurses, physiotherapist, OT, speech therapist, dietitian and even dentist when necessary - all in one stay! It also serves as a step down facility so that patients can be transferred for further rehab once they are medically stable.

Since Siyaphila's opening, Thandi has ensured that the ward has grown into a functional ward, introducing ICF protocols and outcome measures, setting up protocols, systems, and growing relationship between neighbouring and referring hospitals

Poster presentation at the ICF Symposium

A huge part Thandi's input to the rehabilitation team has been the introduction and implementation of the ICF (International Classification of Function) framework into the way the patients at Madwaleni are managed. In June 2017, she presented a poster at The ICF symposium, outlining how ICF has been implemented and how the ward has been used to train visiting medical students in the use of the ICF system.

Support to surrounding hospitals

Thandi has not only served Madwaleni well but she has always been willing and able to serve, support and assist surrounding hospital with her skills, expertise, motivation and encouragement. She has offered support to countless community service therapist and senior therapists in the surrounding areas, whether telephonically or even visiting their hospital to assist with seating cases.

Rehab outreach

Under Thandi's care as acting rehab manager, the rehabilitation team is now serving 8 surrounding clinics on a regular basis as outreach. This improves healthcare delivery, as many patients cannot make it all the way to our hospital.

Qualifications

Thandi is constantly striving to improve herself, and uses any new knowledge or training she receives to train up other therapists in in service training, or to serve other hospitals (especially with difficult wheelchair seating cases)

She is trained in:

- Advanced wheelchair seating
- Neurodevelopmental Therapy (NDT)
- Soon to complete her training in Paediatric NDT

Service outside of Madwaleni Hospital

Being one of the longest standing rural rehab therapists in our area, Thandi is fast becoming a rehab stalwart (although she would never admit it!). She offers assistance to other hospitals and is serving on different capacities in the province in order to fight for rural rehab healthcare to be a priority.

She is:

- Chair of the regional Physiotherapists forum
- Secretary of the provincial physiotherapists forum
- Vice-chair of the wheelchair advisory committee of the Eastern Region.

Inspiration to younger rehabilitation therapists

She has been a source of strength and a consistent rock at Madwaleni and an inspiration to many junior therapists because not only has she persevered and stayed at Madwaleni Hospital but she has never stopped fighting for her patients and the rehabilitation department, whether for equipment, wheelchairs, walking aids or simply the appointment of a therapist.

Cerebral Palsy service

One of Thandi's biggest passion and dedication centers around children with Cerebral Palsy and together with Malamulele Onward, a non-profit organisation who strives to create possibilities for African children living with Cerebral Palsy in rural, poorly resources environments, Thandi has been able to develop an amazing CP service within Madwaleni and the surrounding areas. Over the years the service has grown and developed with each new idea and each visit from Malamulele Onward but if not for Thandi's perseverance and dedication to fight for the children with CP and their caregivers, such a service could have easily been pushed to the side or even forgotten about. She has developed a gold standard CP service according Malamulele Onwards CP Matrix.

She has also been instrumental in the continuation of the annual Rolling Hills Wheelchair Race, an event at Madwaleni that helps to raise awareness for people with disability, as well as a space for those with disability to participate in a community event.

Thandi has an amazing commitment to her local community and speaks Xhosa amazingly well. During a time a few years ago when there were riots at the hospital and the rest of the staff were preparing for an emergency exit of the hospital, Thandi's commitment shone through as she was found in the kitchen, cooking food for her patients and refusing to leave the premises, saying, "This is my community!"

Having worked closely with Thandi for the last four years, and having seen her passion and commitment to the team and the community, I have no doubt that Thandi Conradie deserves this award, and I am certain you will find many rehab therapists in our hospital and our surrounding hospitals who would easily agree. She is a shining example of someone who has been faithful to her commitments here, and has served the community with all the passion, energy, wisdom and skill she has to offer.

Please let me know if you need more details.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Stuart Poole (MBChB, UCT)
Medical Officer at Madwaleni Hospital
Preceptor for learning, WSU

In agreement:

Rone Osche (Occupational Therapist, Madwaleni Hospital)
Duncan Miller (Physiotherapist, Zithulele Hospital)
Helena Langenhoven (Occupational Therapist, Zithulele Hospital)
Professor HOFFIE Conradie (Family Physician, regular visiting support doctor for Madwaleni Hospital)

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