



**NEWSLETTER OF THE
ANATOMICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN AFRICA
WOMEN'S MONTH ISSUE
2020**

IN THIS ISSUE...

A tribute to the Women in Anatomy from the President of ASSA	2
Women's month: A time to look to the light	3
In tribute to Nadia Navsa	4
Calling all the ladies of ASSA	6
University of Kwa-Zulu Natal: Dr Brenda Da Gama and Dr Pam Pillay	7
University of Free State: Dr Petra Maass	8
University of Cape Town: Associate Professor Delva Shamley	10
University of Johannesburg: Dr Erna Bruwer	11
University of Stellenbosch: Associate Professor Karin Baatjes	13
University of the Western Cape: Dr Sahar Hussein Abdul-Rasool	14
University of the Witwatersrand: Associate Professor Desiré Brits	15
Greetings from the Editor	18

A tribute to the Women in Anatomy from the President of the Anatomical Society of Southern Africa

For as long as I have been a member of the Anatomical Society of Southern Africa (ASSA), it has served an academic platform for all anatomical scientists to highlight and present their research in this diverse field. The Council, members of ASSA, and organizing committees of the Annual ASSA Conferences have always endeavoured to create an environment of inclusiveness regardless of gender, ancestry, sexual orientation, or religious beliefs.

In South Africa, August is celebrated as Women's Month – it is a time to pay tribute not only to the thousands of women who marched to the Union Buildings on 9 August 1956 in protest against the abusive pass laws, but also a tribute to the pioneers of the women's movement. It is also fitting that we celebrate the women in the field of anatomical sciences.

So in embracing and celebrating Women's Month and National Women's Day (9 August), there was a call for all the institutions to submit profiles of exceptional women anatomists in their department to be highlighted in a special edition of the ASSA Newsletter that is focused on the "Women in Anatomy", which is supported with much enthusiasm. This originated after a proposal to initiate a "Women in Anatomy" group within ASSA was made, the goal of which will be to provide a future platform for mentorship and collaboration.

I look forward to this initiative and will read with interest the profiles and accomplishments of the amazing women in our Society.



Professor Albert van Schoor
University of Pretoria

Women's month: A time to look to the light



*Emeritus Professor Beverley Kramer
(IFAA President)*

“A woman with a voice is, by definition, a strong woman.” Melinda Gates

In this, the month of celebrating Women, let us not only to look to the future, but also look back at the past and savour the achievements of those great women who came before us. The path of women to the 21st Century is paved with the historical achievements of Women's Suffrage in the 1920's, Women's Rights and the Feminism movement, and in South Africa, the historic march against the pass laws by 20,000 women in August 1956. While there have been substantial accomplishments by women, the course has not always been

easy. History has often ignored or minimised the contributions of women in a variety of spheres and no less so in science and medicine. One only has to consider the history of Rosalind Franklin and the molecular understanding of DNA, or of Henrietta Lacks and the HeLa cell line.

By the time we reached the 21st Century, many societies had accepted women as having an equal position in a “man's” world. This is sadly not yet so in South Africa. Although there is far more representation of women at senior levels now, the number of women in managerial or leadership positions in the corporate world and in academia remains low. Added to gender inequality in the workplace, femicide which is deeply rooted in our country, creates a society in which thriving is particularly difficult for women. South African women need to play strong roles in forging a better world for themselves and for those who will follow. There are key areas in which we, as a nurturing group, should focus - gender parity, alleviation of poverty and sustainability of our environment.

While there have been some exceptional men who supported me during my own career, there have also been some who have been mean, belittling and unaccepting. Optimism has always carried me through. I however, cannot profess to have experienced the terrible torment of some women who still remain subjugated to a father, a husband or even a son, whose

daily existence is threatened by violence or rape, or the anguish of a woman who is castigated for loving another woman. To these women I say, look always to the light. There is always hope, and a kind woman or man to help you develop your own dreams.

As women, we see our calling as going beyond our role in academia to the development of our families and communities and their futures— if we raise our families to understand that women are as valuable, as meaningful, as capable as men, then we will achieve a balanced world where equality and diversity can exist. We need women with progressive mindsets, who are strong role models and who will advocate for women. Let us create room for

women to grow, to be cherished, to be heard.

I wish to leave you with the words of Nora Efron: “Above all, be the heroine of your life, not the victim”.

May you be showered with light this Women’s Month and always!!

Emeritus Professor Beverley Kramer

**President: International Federation of
associations of Anatomists**

**Past-President: Anatomical Society of
Southern Africa**

In tribute to Dr Nadia Navsa

Inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji'un
إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

It is with great sadness that we hear of the passing of Dr Nadia Navsa. Many of us will remember her for how she was dedicated to her work as a physiotherapist and an anatomist and was always willing to assist with clinical insight. Throughout the years, she contributed immensely to the Department of Anatomy at the University of Pretoria, moreover to the country as a whole. She was revered by all her students and will forever be known for her vast knowledge in her fields and how she would seamlessly combine the two for the advancements of her undergraduate and postgraduate students. She will be missed for her sense of humour, love for cake and her passion for teaching. A sister, aunt, friend, mentor and tree has fallen, the forest will never be the same again. As she would so fondly say, “It is done and dusted.”

**Dr Zithulele Tshabalala
Nelson Mandela University**

Nadia Navsa – a woman of worth



*From Left to right: Cleo Thomadakis, **Nadia Navsa**, Madri Janse van Rensburg, Bev Kramer, Leonie law, Theuns Broekman.*

Nadia Navsa started her career in anatomy in the Department of General Anatomy, Faculty of Dentistry, University of the Witwatersrand graduating with a B.Sc Honours in 1989. At first slightly timid, she matured into an engaging and highly productive academic. Discussions at tea-time in the Department were always enriched by Nadia's insightful, and often different, views on an issue. When the Department amalgamated with the Department of Anatomy and Human Biology at the Wits Medical School in 1996, Nadia immediately engaged with the staff in the "old" Department and initiated friendships. Although she left the Department to undertake a physiotherapy degree and then take up a post at the University of Pretoria, she visited her alma mater regularly. In 2010 she obtained her PhD for a study on the metacarpals under the supervision of Professor Maryna Steyn at the University of Pretoria.

Nadia was an excellent teacher of morphological anatomy, a concerned supervisor of young minds and a meticulous researcher. Her project on the morphology of the jugular foramen still draws citations many years after it was published. She worked closely with Professor "Frikkie" van Reenan, Dean of the Wits Faculty of Dentistry, on aspects of the teeth of indigenous Namibian populations, and through Frikkie met numerous renowned international scholars such as Percy Butler, Kees Koornhoff and Ralf Radlanski.

Not only did Nadia enjoy her academic encounters, she also enjoyed engaging with academics at the social level. When Professor Ugo Ripamonti "popped" into the Department on occasion, Nadia would easily switch into Italian and chat to him. In the photo above Nadia is seen at the ASSA Congress held at Berg-en-Dal, Kruger National Park in 1996 which was organized by the Wits Department of Anatomy in the

year of their amalgamation. Nadia was on the Organising Committee for the Congress and thoroughly enjoyed both scientific and social aspects.

Rest in peace Nadia.

Emeritus Professor Beverley Kramer

**Former Head: Wits Departments of
General Anatomy (Dentistry) and
Anatomical Sciences(Health Sciences)**

We, at Wits, will always remember Nadia for her cheery disposition, her warm smile, her quick wit and her willingness to engage.

Calling all the ladies of ASSA

Life becomes busy, overwhelming and sometimes self-care doesn't take priority. We all need inspiration and sometimes that added "push". Although many of the women in anatomy have families with young children, are at different social and academic standings, have impactful careers, some of them take time out to share their advice, and most of all their collegiality shines through. We have several emerging (mostly female) academics in ASSA, some do not get the necessary support at their institution maybe due to small departments or isolated universities. So when some reached out to me after the community of practice session, I thought it would be a great platform for mentorship and offering solutions as we face our work-life balance. We can reach out to senior or experienced or even the junior academics for some

great collaboration, support, advice on how to build our research niches while balancing everyday life. We may run a series of mentorship and support webinars or online activities with national and international stakeholders.

COVID19 has really opened me up to new exciting lines of communication – I sometimes wonder why we didn't do this when we were on campus without restrictions. Then we thought actually going to a place and physical seeing people helps builds collaborations. Further information related to all endeavors will be posted on the ASSA website: www.anatomysa.co.za.

**Dr Pam Pillay
University of KwaZulu Natal**

University of Kwazulu-Natal: Dr Brenda Da Gama & Dr Pam Pillay



Dr Brenda Da Gama

Brenda is a mother to two beautiful princesses, Kayla (11) and Nia (7), who are the reason why I do what I do. She is a Senior Lecturer at the discipline of Clinical Anatomy and also occupies a fractional position in the School of Laboratory Medicine and Medical Sciences as an Academic Leader of Research. She is also a Health Research Ethics fellow with DRILL UKZN. She is also a Life member at ASSA and has served as a Council member previously. Her current areas of research are indigenous belief systems and body donation, medical education and gross anatomy. Through her research, Brenda wants to inform the public, especially the Black African population, on how body donation is an important resource for training future health professionals, and that body shortages compromise medical research. As words of inspiration to all the professional women as we close off women's month, may the spirit of unity that united women on the 9th August 1956 continue to live on through us to the future generations of women at ASSA. Together we stand stronger.



Dr Pam Pillay

Pamela Pillay is a Senior Lecturer in Anatomy, an Academic Leader of Teaching and Learning in Laboratory Medicine and Medical Sciences & a NIH-DRILL Fellow in Health research ethics at UKZN. She is a council member of the Anatomical Society of Southern Africa (ASSA), chair of the Clinical Anatomy and Ethics Interest Group. Outside of academia, she is a mum to 8 year old Keolan. Finding the work-life balance has been "disruptive" during the COVID 19 pandemic because we tend to expect too much of ourselves as women. I know I had placed unrealistic expectations on myself but what I have learnt this year is to be kind to myself, self-care, recognizing we need to keep focus and find balance. Finding this balance plays a pivotal role on your state of mind. Some strategies would be to meditate, cultivate good organization skills, reach out, take time to selfcare and make that choice of what is nice to have and what is a priority.

Dr Pam Pillay
University of Kwa-Zulu Natal

University of the Free State: Dr Petra Maass



Dr Petra Maass

Dr. Petra Maass is well known by her colleagues as a dedicated lecturer who offers outstanding and high-quality education to undergraduate and postgraduate students in the Department of Basic Medical Sciences at the University of Free State. Her current contributions to undergraduate learning and teaching activities in the department include, *inter alia*, the teaching of Anatomy and Embryology to various undergraduate groups in the department, and she acts as the co-course coordinator for the Anatomy and Cell Morphology BSc Med Honours programme. She was actively involved the past few years in curriculum development and specifically in the redesign of the Honours programme. She has established and currently manages the research skills

module for this course. Although this module serves to train postgraduate students in various aspects of academia, it also serves as a training or refresher course for junior staff members.

Her real passion lies in the field of forensic anthropology. Under her guidance, as module leader of this part of the honours course, students currently follow a more practical, hands-on approach that benefitted both students and junior staff members. She acts as a *pro bono* consultant to the Free State Forensic Pathology Services in medico-legal cases which involve decomposed or skeletonized human remains. She has also co-presented a training workshop in forensic anthropology for forensic pathology officers of the Western Cape Forensic Pathology Services. She established and annually presents the "*Forensic Osteoarchaeology & Excavation – Theory & Practice*" workshops to second-year Forensic Sciences students of the Departments of Forensic Genetics and Basic Medical Sciences at the University of the Free State.

Besides Petra's high under- and postgraduate teaching loads, she proved herself as an established researcher. Currently, she manages the skeletal collection used for anthropology research housed in the Department of Basic Medical Sciences at the University of the Free State. Under her guidance, the research

collection has grown substantially. She is also the principal investigator for ongoing departmental research projects on this collection, including six postgraduate research studies over the past three years. She also established (photographed and documented) a small trauma and pathology collection used for forensic anthropology teaching. Currently, she acts as a supervisor for various postgraduate students (all female!) in projects relating to the evaluation of sexual dimorphism of the bones of the upper limb, acetabulum, teeth, as well as stature estimation using the sacrum, in a Free State population. Under her supervision, students are exposed to real forensic casework at the provincial state mortuary, offering students the opportunity to build professional relationships and experience application of work in the "real world" context. Furthermore, she acts as a role model for younger staff members and guides them through the processes of providing quality postgraduate supervision.

She has made several research contributions in peer-reviewed journals, with publications that have appeared in the journals *Anthropologischer Anzeiger*; *HOMO – Journal of Comparative Human Biology*, *International Journal of Osteoarchaeology*, *Forensic Science International*, and the *Journal of Forensic Sciences*. She presented research results on national level, and her research work was presented internationally at the meetings of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences (AAFA) and the International Federation of Associations of Anatomists (IFAA). She also acts as a reviewer for the *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, and the *International Journal of Osteoarchaeology*.

As a member of different departmental committees, her contributions focus on inspiring modern approaches in learning and teaching. She is co-chairperson of the journal club and an active member of the marketing committee in the department, where she has contributed to the success of annual UFS open days and has conceptualized and produced various videos, for example, on medical students' dissection hall experiences and motivational messages from departmental staff to students during the COVID-19 lockdown period.

Petra continually strives for excellence in the field of teaching and learning as well as research and is recognized by her peers for the high quality work that she delivers to her students and to the department Basic Medical Sciences. Her peers value her for her continued contributions to the field of Anatomy, as a dedicated supervisor and as excellent role model to her students. Petra responded as follows when asked about inspirational women in her life and also has a special message for young women.

Is there a woman who inspires you? – *Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States of America.*

Who would you like to celebrate this Women's Month, and why? – *All women in science, for working to make the world better one molecule, one computation, one experiment at a time.*

What advice would you give to young lecturers in your field? – *Show up every day with a purpose. Work harder every day for your purpose. Never be afraid to ask for help, but also never be afraid to offer it.*

**Dr Sanet van Zyl
University of the Free State**

University of Cape Town: Associate Professor Delva Shamley



Associate Professor Delva Shamley

Professor Shamley started her career as a Physiotherapist, Anatomist and Histologist. Although she has diversified into other areas, her belief in and commitment to the relevance of anatomy is reflected in both her teaching approach and her research. She has a strong belief that when teaching health care students anatomy, it is critical not to lose the clinical relevance, which is what spurs enthusiasm for the subject. To this end she has introduced Clinical Reasoning cases which train the student to explain the signs and symptoms by using theory of both anatomy and physiology. These have been extremely well received by students and staff alike and she has trained many junior staff in this approach.

Professor Shamley has a track record of postgraduate student supervision to PhD

level, publications and grant success. She has taught anatomy and research design and methods to postgraduates' students and clinicians in Oxford, Bournemouth and SA. External consultancies include peer reviewing for journals, grant reviewing for the HTA (UK), NRF (SA), Flanders Foundation (Belgium) and EDCTP (EU). Professor Shamley is also committed to the development of care pathways for breast cancer survivors and was the first to provide evidence of anatomical changes in breast cancer survivors experiencing treatment related pain and dysfunction.

Her REACH program of research has two main goals:

Firstly to identify risk factors for the development of upper limb morbidity in breast cancer survivors. This required, in part, an understanding of the anatomical mechanism of upper limb pain and dysfunction. Her postgraduate students have undertaken dissection studies of cadavers with a history of breast cancer treatment. These were the first to demonstrate gross and histological evidence to support the clinical belief that treatment causes fibrosis, which in turn may contribute to the development of morbidity. One of her students is in his final year of MBChB and is committed to the ongoing study of anatomy in the clinical context. If anatomy as a subject is to survive it is critical that we do not see anatomy in isolation of related subjects such as clinical practice and bioengineering. In addition, using anatomy

to validate imaging techniques remains an essential advantage. Her postgraduate students have validated ultrasound images of fibrosis with the subsequent gross anatomical and histological images.

Secondly to develop integrated care pathways for managing Lymphoedema and upper limb pain and disability in breast cancer survivors. A major component of this is to develop exercise programmes to reduce pain and dysfunction. This is not possible without a clear knowledge of the anatomy and how it has changed biomechanics of movement. Correcting movement patterns is now the main component of rehabilitation and requires

achieving a balance between muscle activity. To do this you must know anatomy. Professor Shamley has trained students, clinicians and cancer survivors in SA and the UK for over 15 years. She has provided consultation for McMillan Trust (UK) to redesign their exercise booklets and programmes. Behind all this growth in clinical knowledge and thus treatment was an understanding of anatomy, and cancer survivors are the better for this development.

Kentse Mpolokeng

University of Cape Town

University of Johannesburg: Dr Erna Bruwer

“A teacher plants the seeds of knowledge sprinkles them with love and patiently nurtures their growth to produce tomorrow’s dreams”. UJ’s Dr. Erna Bruwer is the embodiment of these attributes; she goes beyond the call of duty to support her students and fellow academics. She has been involved in teaching Anatomy to undergraduate Allied Health Sciences (Nursing and Optometry) students for the past 37 years at the University of Johannesburg. She completed a Post-graduate Diploma in Health Science Education at the University of Witwatersrand.

Dr. Bruwer’s contribution to teaching anatomy is best described through the words of a past student: “Praise to God for

great minds like Erna who guide, support, encourage, believe in and influence the next generation, leaving a legacy.” This quote aptly describes the type of relationship that Dr. Bruwer has with her students. She touches the lives of her students by being a dedicated and innovative teacher; helping her students recognise their potential and guiding them along the road to success.

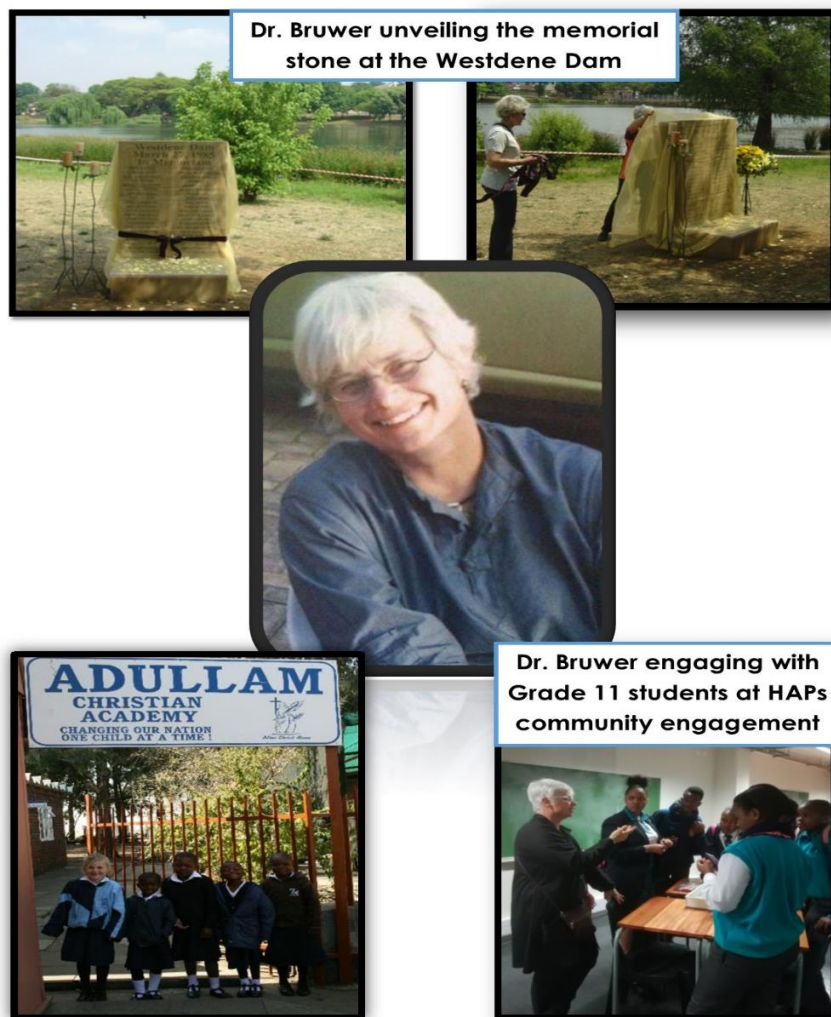
The University of Johannesburg places a high priority on community engagement and Dr. Bruwer has not shied away from this. She has been actively involved in several community projects over the years. The “Westdene Dam: Parks Alive Project” is close to her heart, where various flora were labelled and classified around the

Westdene Dam. This project, with the assistance of Councilor Cindy Billson and the community of Westdene, built a memorial stone for the tragic bus accident in 1985. Her hard work and dedication to this project earned her a recognition award from the University of Johannesburg for community engagement. In 2011, she received the award once again for her contribution to the “Caring hearts: The Adullam Missionary Project: Parks Alive Project”. Dr. Bruwer also played an integral role in the implementation of the UJ Summer School, which empowered learners from grade 5 to 8 by introducing them to the world of Science and possible careers in Science within the University environment.

Dr. Bruwer also serves as a Senate member for the Ann Latsky Nursing College and acts as an external moderator for their Human Anatomy courses offered. In 2019, she was the keynote speaker at the Annual Ann Latsky Nursing Conference.

Dr. Bruwer is truly a remarkable woman and academic that continues to leave an everlasting footprint in the minds and hearts of students, fellow colleagues and the wider community.

Sundika Ishwarkumar
University of Johannesburg



University of Stellenbosch: Associate Professor Karin Baatjes



Associate Professor Karin Baatjes

Karin Baatjes is an associate professor in Surgery and the head of the Division of Clinical Anatomy at the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences of Stellenbosch University. She qualified as Fellow of the College of Surgeons of South Africa in 2004 and completed her MMed in Surgery in 2005. She obtained her PhD in Surgery in 2018 and has been the Divisional head of Clinical Anatomy since January 2018. During her time, she initiated the establishment of SUAS (Stellenbosch University Anatomy Society) whose mission it is to develop a platform where students of the Tygerberg Student Union (TSU) and personnel of the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences and Tygerberg hospital can develop their shared interests in anatomy within a clinical context. Karin is instrumental in integrating clinical problems into anatomy research and renamed the Division to reflect this emphasis. She has also initiated

collaborative projects with several clinical departments.

In 2018 and 2019, respectively, she completed the SAFRI (Sub-Saharan African Faimer Regional Institute) fellowship and the Scholarship of Educational Leadership (SoEL) course. In 2019, she was awarded the Teaching excellence award in the Developing teacher category. Karin has taken a leadership role in the development of the new medical curriculum which starts in 2022, including the continued important role of clinical anatomy. She is a keen supporter of blended learning and the incorporation of advanced technology in the teaching and learning of clinical anatomy.

Karin is passionate about the development of especially the young career anatomists in the Division by supporting the attendance of both teaching and research related workshops as well as furthering their education. She is also actively involved in the development of research projects and career development plans of staff.

In her relatively short period as head of the division, Karin has already had an incredibly positive impact on staff and students alike and together we look forward to what the future holds!

Sanet Kotze and Kerri Keet
University of Stellenbosch

University of Western Cape: Dr Sahar Hussein Abdul-Rasool



Dr. Sahar Hussein Abdul-Rasool

Dr. Sahar Abdul-Rasool who is currently a Senior Lecturer in Anatomy at the University of the Western Cape's Department of Medical Bioscience, qualified as a Medical doctor, obtained postgraduate qualifications in Anatomy and has about 30 years of Anatomy teaching experience. She was mainly involved in the establishment of the anatomy facility and initiated Anatomy teaching at the Omar Al-Mukhtar University, Al-Bayda, Libya in 2000 and applied similar experience in her contribution to the design and implementation of the state-of-the-art Anatomy facility in the New Life Sciences Building at UWC.

Dr. Abdul-Rasool was actively involved in the creation and administration of many undergraduate and postgraduate Anatomy

courses at the Department of Medical Biosciences especially the creation of two clinically-oriented Anatomy courses for BChDI and BChDII, which have since been in implementation. The courses passed the HPCSA evaluation and generated extra subsidy funding and anatomy academic and support staff positions for the Department. She is now the coordinator of the Anatomy BChDII course as well as the Honours level Specialist module in Anatomical Sciences. She serves on the Teaching and Learning portfolio in the Department's Executive Committee as well as many Faculty and University academic committees.

Dr. Abdul-Rasool's research interests include anatomy education, clinical anatomy and molecular oncology. She established a Molecular Biology Laboratory in 2007 which received substantial funding support from the Cancer Association of South Africa (CANSA) for the training of postgraduate students, many of whom are black females. The Laboratory also supports many other students for studies involving such molecular biology techniques as Macromolecule blotting and probing, qPCR, RNA isolation, sequencing, etc.

Dr. Abdul-Rasool always promotes collegiality among staff members and has an immense capacity to provide mentoring support to postgraduate students and

younger members of staff, among whom is her former Honours and MSc graduate who is the first black female academic staff in the Department. Most of her current and graduated MSc and PhD students are also black females.

As a Life member of ASSA, Dr. Abdul-Rasool always encourages and supports younger members of staff to join ASSA and attend conferences and workshops. She is an active member of the LOC for UWC hosting of an ASSA Conference.

Dr Okobi Ekpo

University of the Western Cape

University of the Witwatersrand: Associate Professor Desiré Brits



Associate Professor Desiré Brits

It was recently my privilege to interview my colleague and member of the School of Anatomical Sciences. While her colleagues and many of the ASSA membership have all enjoyed her sunny disposition and enthusiasm in the various capacities that she has served in across our society, it is the intention of this profile through a series of questions to highlight the incredible

person behind the welcoming smile and infectious laugh!

Where do you originally come from and what motivated you to choose a career in the sciences and in particular a career within the anatomical Sciences?

I was born, raised and educated in Gauteng, with a detour to KwaZulu Natal as a toddler. I was drawn to a career in the field of forensic sciences by Dr Dana Katherine Scully from the TV series, The X-files. This fictional female character was an FBI agent and performed autopsies, on aliens. So as a teenager I started dissecting my fathers "catch of the day" and developed a love for biology and anatomy. My parents realised my passion early on, and I am very fortunate to have been motivated and supported by my family to pursue my interests.

What is your role in the School of Anatomical Sciences?

I am an associate professor in the School of Anatomical Sciences and currently the

acting head of the Biological Anthropology Division. I am also a member of the Human Variation and Identification Research Unit (HVIRU) and coordinator of the Human Identification Unit (HIU).

What is your area of research and how have you grown the research expertise of women in this field?

My area of research is in forensic anthropology and osteology. My current research focus is on decomposition and taphonomy in the interior of South Africa and establishing identification methods, specific for South African populations, using medical imaging modalities. I also enjoy work related to bone histology. To help grow and empower women in forensic anthropology, I have helped secure tuition for a number of female postgraduate students and to date, I have co-supervised / supervising 12 honours, 8 MSc and 4 PhD female students. I have motivated these students to present their research at local and/or international conferences and have been able to contribute funding towards this. I continuously motivate these women to publish their work and almost all my MSc students, who have completed their degrees, have published their research in accredited journals or are working on publications. I have also extended an invitation to my students to join me in field work and/or in the forensic lab, to gain more experience and confidence in the field of forensic anthropology.

What motivated you to choose your area of research?

Following in Dr Scully's (from The X-files) footsteps entailed studying medicine, which was not my passion. However, I had a love for biology and as such registered for a BSc at the University of Pretoria. As an undergraduate student I was introduced to forensic anthropology and have never

looked back. Realising the challenges faced by South African forensic anthropologists and becoming aware of the various gaps in our methodologies (specific to our populations), have been instrumental in my choice of research. Bettering our methodologies and understanding, results in more accurate descriptions of the biological profile, which significantly contributes to the positive identification of unknown decedents, giving a voice to victims – this inspires me.

Do you have somebody in the discipline who has served as a mentor or role model to you in your development in the discipline of Anatomy? How has this person inspired you to in developing your colleagues and students within this field?

Prof Maryna Steyn has always been a role model to me, and I see her as the mother of forensic anthropology in South Africa. She was my undergraduate lecturer, my MSc supervisors and later took on the headship in the School of Anatomical Sciences at Wits. She was instrumental in bridging the gaps between forensic pathology, forensic anthropology and the South African Police Service. She established a very successful Forensic Anthropology Research Centre (FARC) at the University of Pretoria and when she joined Wits, she established the Human Variation and Identification Research Unit (HVIRU) and formalised collaborations with the Forensic Pathology Services and the South African Police Services. It is through these collaborations that Wits assists with the identification of unknown decedents found in a forensic context. Prof Steyn has always drawn those interested in the field in and shared/made opportunities with/for them. She shares her successes and motivates for the success of everyone. Her expertise and experience are recognised worldwide, yet she is humble and not afraid to admit if she is not sure. She is the

example I would like to be for my colleagues and students.

How have you contributed to the growth of women in the anatomical sciences either in the teaching and/or research domains?

I believe many of the women I have taught over the years are now successful clinicians, therapists, scientists, researchers, lecturers. Many women obtained postgraduate degrees under my supervision while some of my current postgraduate students are working as teaching assistants or junior lecturers at Wits and/or other institutions. I also believe that helping these women present and publish their research has empowered and motivated them. One of my PhD students was accepted into the FACTS Summer Internship Program and volunteered for the Operation Identification Program in Texas, USA. Another one of my postgraduate students became my colleague, after completing her PhD. She is an incredible lecturer and received a research grant from the American Academy of Forensic Sciences Humanitarian and Human Rights Resource Center (AAFS HHRRC) to support her research and further forensic anthropology.

What do you feel still needs to be done to help encourage the growth of women in academia and in particular within the field of anatomical sciences?

I believe our efforts should focus on equity, equality and mentoring. It is important to provide women with the necessary opportunities and resources to aid them in achieving their full potential. Creating opportunities, developing training programs and providing funding will significantly help women to rise to the occasion. Implementing formal and informal mentoring programmes along with support groups can provide women with an environment conducive to the development

of self-esteem and confidence and can prepare them for the expectations of academia. I also believe that the support, motivation and encouragement of fellow women in academia can foster a culture of female success.

What do you feel has been one of the greatest challenges to the growth of women in the field of Anatomy and also within the general scope of Academia?

I know that there are still many hurdles to overcome, but for me, the lack of female confidence is at the forefront of the problem. I believe that this is further exacerbated by traditional attitudes, stereotyping and gender imbalances.

Any words of encouragement for emergent anatomists within the field.....

The path to success and fulfilled dreams are steep and endless. Make your own opportunities and follow your own path. Always view failures as learning opportunities and to quote Oprah Winfrey "Think like a queen. A queen is not afraid to fail. Failure is just another stepping stone to greatness". Dream big – take the leap!

How do you choose to spend your time outside or work?

I love the outdoors and enjoy being active. I love food, although I can barely cook an egg. I am a complete neat freak with an indescribable love for animals. I have a Great Dane and a sausage dog to who's rule I bow. And most of all, I enjoy spending time with my husband.

Dr Erin Hutchinson
University of the Witwatersrand

GREETINGS FROM THE EDITOR

It is my privilege to bring you this special issue of the ASSA newsletter focussing on the extraordinary Women in Anatomy. In my personal capacity I grow orchids and while very new to this hobby, something these incredible plants have taught me is, patience and resolve! Orchids have also taught me that it takes all kinds and each is as lovely and unique as the next. In times gone by we have all been caught up in the hustle of trying to balance work and home and often as colleagues we pass each other by like ships in the night, COVID-19 has done little to remedy this. The idea behind this issue was to give each institution under the ASSA banner an opportunity to highlight a lady of their choosing. While we can't all take advantage of the hustle and bustle of conference this year, we can take a moment to get to know each other better. I would also like to thank Dr Pam Pillay from the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal for her initiative in giving the ladies of ASSA a platform for engagement. I look forward to further developments in this regard.

I would also like to thank every academic institution for their contribution to the ASSA newsletter. At a time when we are all incredibly busy and some overwhelmed by the sudden shift to online learning, the news contributed is the news contained herein. I wish every member the very best in their preparations for the upcoming exam period and trust that your innovative approaches to online teaching and learning will shine through! Keep safe and well!

Best wishes



Erin Hutchinson