



# Medical Technology Professionals NEWS

Newsletter for Medical Technology Professional Board



# COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE IN HEALTHCARE SERVICES

*Ms Refiloe Moutlwatse*



**Refiloe Moutlwatse**

Commitments to community participation are common in health policy, yet ways to maximise the input and impact of Community Representatives (CR) in health service delivery and care remain elusive.

The Health Professional Council of South Africa (HPCSA) has 12 Professional Boards under its ambit committed to protecting the public and guiding the professions. The Community Representatives are appointed by the Ministry of Health in terms of Regulation 1245 relating to the Constitution of these boards. They serve in specific boards and can sit on committees, councils, in meetings and in many other forums to represent not just their own perspective, but the perspective and experience of the community.

The Professional Board for Medical Technology (PMTB) is constituted of 10 members of which at least 20% is Community Representation. According to the Health Professional Act 56 of 1974, a “Community Representative (CR)” means a person appointed by the Minister as a CR and who is not registered in terms of this Act. CR impacts individuals and the community as a whole by working with healthcare professionals. They educate and provide healthcare information to improve communication between the health

services and the community.

Roles	Responsibilities
Protect the interests of carers, consumers and the community.	Attend regular board, committee and network meetings.
Present how carers, consumers and the community may feel and think about certain issues.	Bring a carer, consumer or community perspective.
Contribute to the consumer or carer experience.	Represent collective views, concerns and issues rather than their own person opinions, individual views or interests.
Ensure committees recognise community concerns.	Act as two way communication link between the network, health service and broader community.
Report activities of committees to consumers and the community.	

The Community Representatives operating within a health service needs support to facilitate and navigate, to achieve the “agenda for change”. Understanding of the latest health system’s operations will enable advocacy for more receptive organisational cultures and transformation.

The action and influence of Community Representative in a health service context facilitates the express purpose of coordinating, supporting and promoting participation of professional members. The valuable knowledge and access to information on what is going on in the health services will support identification of issues for action and a prompt response. The aim is to develop a shared vision to change staff attitudes and improve moral. Active recognition and encouragement are needed among the

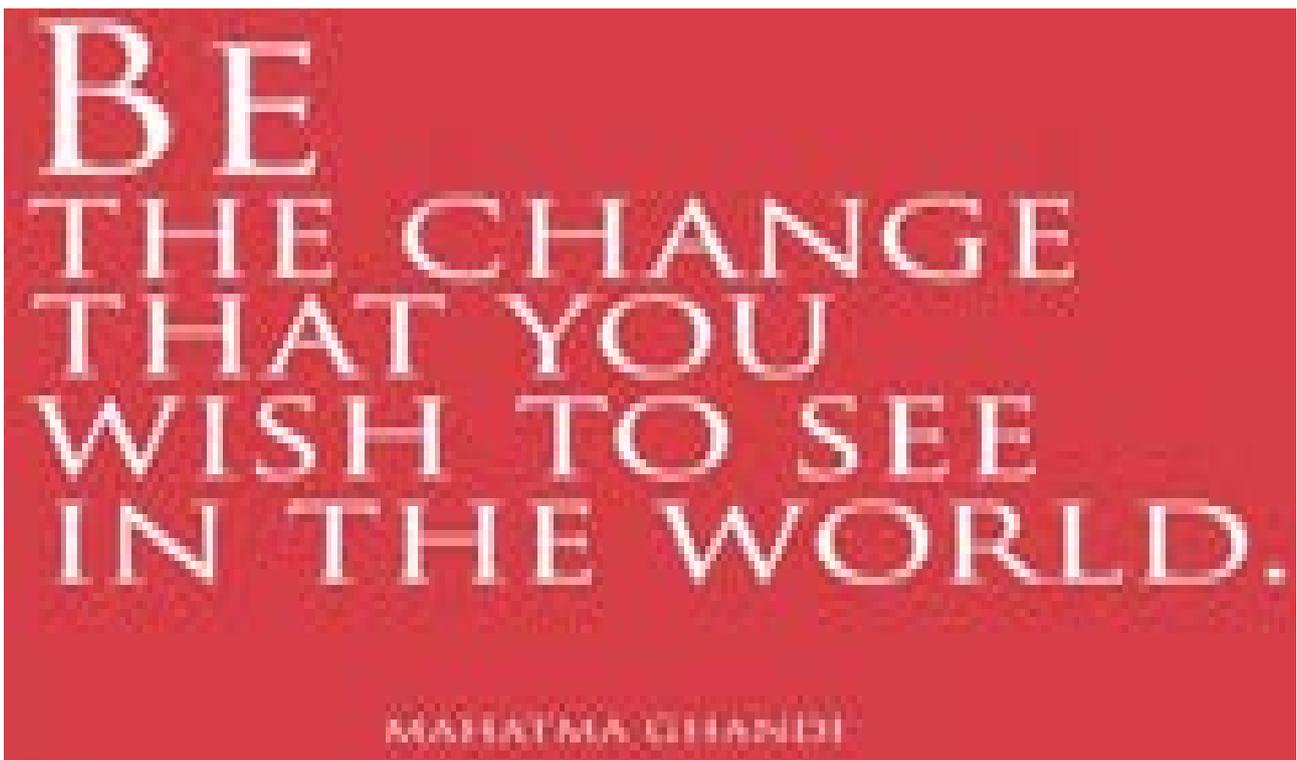


medical technology community to make lasting improvements to the patient experience. To achieve this, there is a need to question Medical Technology (MT) Community expectations and share these expectations with other key stakeholders for the betterment of our profession and community healthcare services. A holistic approach is needed to improve awareness of Medical Technology to the public. Together we can build an accessible, affordable, efficient and sustainable healthcare service delivery for all.

“Without a sense of caring, there can be no sense of **community.**” - Anthony J. D’Angelo

Let’s hear your views on” How we can engage to better serve the Community at large inclusive of Medical Technology Community?

Let’s Chat...



# REAFFIRMING MY ROLE IN THE NEW LANDSCAPE OF THE MEDICAL TECHNOLOGY PROFESSION

Ms Andrea Sheldon

Transformation in the medical professions was underpinned by a desire to professionalise the work sector in line with the South African government's plan to revitalise and restructure the South African healthcare system. The Health Professions Act 56 of 1974 (South Africa) was promulgated to control the education, training and registration of professions registered under this Act. "Healthcare provider or practitioner" is a term used to describe a person providing health services in terms of any law (doctors, nurses, technologists, technicians, pharmacists etc.). They are registered with a statutory council such as HPCSA or Nursing Council. Medical Technologists are considered *core personnel* in a diagnostic medical laboratory.

Even though we as medical technologists might not deal directly with our patients, our very skill is paramount in a patient's care and treatment. My conscientious nature and benevolence are acknowledged with each patient result reported. As a medical technologist my experience and training are acknowledged by every successful intern. For every successful registrar that progresses to pathologist, we as medical technologists play a role, even if as simple as coaching pipetting techniques. My commitment to a higher work ethic is evident in my documentation practices and exercising of confidentiality.

Through the years the profession of Medical Technology has evolved to where we are today. Our profession includes the skill and dedication from laboratory assistants, medical technicians, medical technologists and now medical laboratory scientists. The daily functions performed by these work categories are interdependent and generally overseen by a pathologist.

The phenomenal development in medical science has made way for an uprising of a scientific techniques-oriented faction. While this may interest some, it certainly does not undermine the loyal dedicated core personnel who have years of experience to pass on to the new generation

of medical professionals.

Medical technologists, just like some technicians and scientists, are involved with diagnostic work. We are a team – sometimes we prepare samples, sometimes we do instrument maintenance and sometimes we actually report the results to a clinician. So, irrespective of title, you as the medical technologist have had a direct influence on a sample's result and thereby a patient's well-being. This is ultimately the very nature of our profession.

## MEDICAL LABORATORY PROFESSION

An unknown profession to some and not so important to many.

It's because we are quiet and unseen, but we see things beyond the capacity of the naked eye.

We know the condition of our patients without even seeing them.

We may not take care of our patients but we care about what's wrong with them.

We may not charm doctors but they rely on us.

We play an essential part as the backbone of the diagnostic team.

We are the **MEDICAL LABORATORY PROFESSIONALS.**

*unknown*



# MEDICAL TECHNICIANS: HPCSA ENHANCING CAREER PATHS

*Mr Napo Nthunya*

In promoting and guiding the profession, the Professional Board for Medical Technology is living up to its mandate and harnessing the aspirations of the Medical Technicians by creating a conducive environment for further studying.

Keeping up with the Council of Higher Education advice, the Medical Technician qualification's NQF Level 4 shall be reviewed. The Professional Board for Medical Technology is recommending that the qualification be pegged at NQF Level 6 as it is a two years certificate requiring Matric qualification.

## Concepts to be understood:

**Scope of Profession for a Medical Technician: This is fully regulated in line with Ethical and Professional Rules as enshrined in the HPCSA Act, 56 of 1974.**

- A Medical Technician shall confine himself or herself to practising in the specific discipline of medical technology in which he or she was educated, trained and registered.
- A Medical Technician shall perform professional acts only under the supervision

of a medical practitioner or medical technologist who is registered in the relevant discipline; and

- He/She shall not conduct a private practice.

## Scope of Practice:

This is a discipline specific competence that is guided by the Ethical Rules of the HPCSA that states that a practitioner may only perform professional acts for which he/she has been adequately trained and in which he/she is sufficiently experienced or proficient

## Opportunities for Medical Technicians:

The new NQF Level pegging shall open an opportunity for portability in Medical Technology Career Pathway for Medical Technicians. They can now link up nicely into the Quality Council for Trade Occupations (QCTO) qualifications that go up to NQF Level 8 and thus be compatible with Academic NQF Levels in ensuring Lifelong Learning.

The public reward for this is improved quality service and better positioning the cohort for the National Health Insurance rollout.



# THE NEW KID ON THE BLOCK!

## Forensic Pathology Officer

*Mr Corrie Pieters*

**Perhaps an understatement, let's find out**

### **Where did Forensic Pathology start in South Africa?**

The Forensic Pathology is a unit with a rich history coming over decades, however the services were rendered under two departments with the South African Police Service (SAPS) taking the leading role of the investigation on the scene, collecting and storing the bodies at private undertakers and limited state mortuaries. The majority of the cases were unnatural cases as the core function, but the SAPS were compelled to collect the so called "grey area" bodies which turned out to be natural cases.

The post mortem segment was dealt with by the medical officers [mostly then called district surgeons] and who were registered with the HPCSA [or those days the Medical and Dental Board]. The SAPS dealt with the family and undertakers to release the bodies and completed the investigation process.

### **Change was born**

During a cabinet decision in 1998 it was decided to reallocate the service from the SAPS to the Department of Health. This was implemented on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2006 nationally with a Memorandum of Understanding in place between the SAPS and Department of Health.

April 2006 saw a change in the way services were delivered to the community in all nine provinces from provincial department of health level. A lot was done during the early days to ensure that the services were rendered without a challenge.

To date the services are rendered under each of the nine provincial department of health sections.

Changes were obligatory, however new challenges lies on the horizon for the service in various fields.

To mention only a few but not limited to:

Infrastructure sustainability; Transport fleet; Medical Equipment replacement; Registration of Forensic Pathology Officers with HPCSA.

During the recent demands of workers it came to light that they themselves want to be recognised by a professional body and on the other hand the employer also wanted the same for the workers. The employer then approached the HPCSA for assistance.

The HPCSA only then started to get involved in discussions to facilitate the process of establishing a register, which still needs the final approval of the Minister of Health.

### **Why Forensic Pathology Officers need to register with HPCSA**

The Forensic Pathology Officer currently in the service of the Department of Health throughout South Africa will need to be registered with the HPCSA Board in order to continue practice by law. In short this means that after the minister has signed and approved the register, all Forensic Pathology Officers will need to be registered as Forensic Pathology Officers in the supplementary section of the Forensic Pathology Register in order to continue working in the future.

In the event of any Forensic Pathology Officer who fails/refuse to register with the HPCSA, he or she will not be allowed to practise as a Forensic Pathology Officer.

"All individuals who practise any of the health care professions incorporated in the scope of the HPCSA are obligated by the Health Professions Act No. 56 of 1974 to register with the Council. Failure to do so constitutes a criminal offence."

Deregistration of a Forensic Pathology Officer from the register will follow in the event where the member resigns from the Department of Health; retirement; transfer out of Forensic Pathology Service section; failure to renew registration and misconduct to only mention a few examples. All of the above will need the approval of Council.



Once the Minister of Health signs and approves the register for Forensic Pathology Officer, a grace period [to be determined by council] will be given to all Forensic Pathology Officers to register.

The current situation is justified [but need to be corrected] as this cadre of workers never belonged to any recognised institution in the past and by establishing this register now means acknowledging the shortcomings that were there in the past. The HPCSA can only regulate and guide the professionals who are registered with them.

Both employees and employers have a responsibility to ensure that each Forensic Pathology Officer gets registered as soon as the register is opened as it can negatively impact on both the employer and employee. Penalties can be imposed to both employee and employer should they be found guilty of such misconduct [fines get determined by the HPCSA on a yearly basis].

### **The HPCSA Council guides and regulates the health professions in South Africa.**

**Who is HPCSA?** <http://www.hpcsa.co.za>

### **Health Professional Council of South Africa**

The HPCSA is a statutory body, which is guided by a formal regulatory framework and this includes our founding Act, Health Professions Act 56 of 1974.

### **The council consist currently of 12 boards:**

- Dental Assisting, Dental Therapy and Oral

Hygiene

- Dietetics and Nutrition
- Emergency Care
- Environmental Health
- Medical and Dental
- Medical Technology
- Occupational Therapy, Medical Orthotics, Prosthetics & Arts Therapy
- Optometry & Dispensing Opticians
- Physiotherapy, Podiatry and Biokinetics
- Psychology
- Radiography & Clinical Technology
- Speech Language and Hearing Professions

The Forensic Pathology Officer Register will be managed from the Medical Technology Board.

In closure, Forensic Pathology Service can indeed be seen as “The new kid on the block” as the current cadre will be registered at a recognised institution [HPCSA] for the very first time.

### **Reference:**

- Public comment send to National Department of Health in June 2018
- MTB minutes regarding Forensic Pathology Register
- HPCSA website: <http://www.hpcsa.co.za>



# GENERAL INFORMATION



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extracts verification of licensure**

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