

PETITION FROM THE UNEMPLOYED PHARMACISTS OF THE EASTERN CAPE

It is now 10 months since that Thursday morning of the 5th March 2020; when, the National Minister of Health – Dr Zwelini Mkhize, made the announcement about the first case of a patient testing positive for SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, confirmed by the National Institute of Communicable Diseases. The Minister went on to announce: “The patient is a 38 year old male who travelled to Italy with his wife. They were part of a group of 10 people and they arrived back in South Africa on March 1, 2020.....with symptoms of fever, headache, malaise, a sore throat and a cough.” COVID-19 has since been declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organisation and that unknown patient has become known to us, whether they were a patient we looked after, dispensed medication to and/or a close relative, up to and including those who succumbed to the illness.

Most of us were doing our Community Service and three months into it and had to be at the forefront of a ravaging disease that had never been seen before and were never even taught about at University. We had to literally learn every day. The year 2020, marked exactly 22 years since the Health Professions Amendment Act No. 56 was signed into law by President Nelson Mandela in 1998, ushering in a system of mandatory community service in the public health sector for all health professionals in South Africa. A group of 406 Pharmacists started their Community Service in the year 2001. This legal imperative has assisted us to learn on the go about the treatment of COVID-19 as part of the frontline staff and has given us all experience we would otherwise not have had.

In an interview with *Health-E News* in November 2019, former Director General of the Department of Health Precious Matsoso explains that: “The medicine value chain plays a critical role in the overall performance of the health system under NHI. The Pharmacy professional is the key to managing the medicine value chain effectively, ensuring the success of NHI as, without medicines, treatment programmes cannot succeed.” We know this because we saw it first hand during our Community Service year, serving as the first point of call for access to lifesaving medicines at the height of the pandemic. Even now, as the National Government plans a rollout of a vaccination programme, Pharmacists are critical in the distribution of these Vaccines to the general public, educate the public on the conspiracy theories regarding vaccines, dispel myths, ensure accessibility and availability at the right time, right dose, right patient, right route and more importantly the right drug.

We are a Group of unemployed qualified Pharmacists from the Eastern Cape, with a critical scarce skill that is needed and necessary in combating a global pandemic such as COVID-19 and the rollout of the vaccination programme against the disease. We would like to petition Dr S Zungu, Dr S Buthelezi, Dr Z Mkhize, Ms S Gomba, Mr O Mabuyane, Mr M Dimaza and Mr A Soka to look into the plight of the unemployed Pharmacists in the Eastern Cape and absorb them into the Healthcare system to help in the fight against the pandemic and ensuring the welfare of the general public through pharmaceutical services.

CC:

Dr S Zungu – ACTING SUPERINTENDENT GENERAL - EC HEALTH

Dr S Buthelezi – DIRECTOR GENERAL – NATIONAL DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Dr Z Mkhize – NATIONAL MINISTER – DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH – Republic of South Africa

Ms S. Gomba – MEC FOR HEALTH – EASTERN CAPE

Mr O. Mabuyane – EASTERN CAPE PREMIER

Mr M Dimaza – CHAIRPERSON – EASTERN CAPE PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURE HEALTH COMMITTEE

Mr A Soka – DIRECTOR PHARMACEUTICAL SERVICES – EASTERN CAPE

Full Name	Qualification	Practice Number	Signature
1. Chuma Baba	Registered pharmacist	P22887	C.Baba
2. Sikholiwe Mjamba	Registered pharmacist	P50603	S.Mjamba
3. Noluvo Mbabela	Registered pharmacist	P47688	N.Mbabela
4. Samkelo Apleni	Registered pharmacist	P50600	S.Apleni
5. Monwabisi Mbusi	Registered pharmacist	P50690	M.Mbusi
6. Nduduzo Hlazo	Registered pharmacist	P48558	N.Hlazo
7. Mawande Yoyo	Registered pharmacist	P49140	M.Yoyo
8. Sesethu Leve	Registered pharmacist	P50670	S.Leve
9. Athenkosi Mvulana	Registered pharmacist	P50586	A.Mvulana
10. Vuyile Sigwela	Registered pharmacist	P46606	V.Sigwela
11. Zandisiwe Mbawuli	Registered pharmacist	P50712	Z.Mbawuli
12. Kanya Dekeda	Registered pharmacist	P50540	K.Dekeda
13. Axola Pakade	Registered pharmacist	P50133	A.Pakade
14. Zukiswa Abigail Tshisa	Registered pharmacist	P47019	ZA.Tshisa
15. Ncebakazi Qhekeza	Registered pharmacist	P50614	N.Qhekeza
16. Siphivosoxolo Qoyo	Registered pharmacist	P50696	S.Qoyo
17. Nobulali Mlindi	Registered pharmacist	P48077	N.Mlindi
18. Zizipho Vumazonke	Registered pharmacist	P45626	Z.Vumazonke
19. Momelezi Conjwa	Registered pharmacist	P49156	M.Conjwa
20. Babalwa Rowls	Registered pharmacist	P43561	B.Rowls
21. Avuyile Sandla	Registered pharmacist	P48231	A.Sandla
22. Milisa Sivile	Registered pharmacist	P48229	M.Sivile
23. Lolwethu Virgil Gqwede	Registered pharmacist	P52834	LV.Gqwede
24. Phumza Tilana	Registered pharmacist	P50606	P.Tilana
25. Lameez Pedro	Registered pharmacist	P45617	L.Pedro
26. Belinda Odei-Addo	Registered pharmacist	P48239	B.Odei-Addo
27. Akua Zantsi	Registered pharmacist	P42521	A.Zantsi
28. Okuhle Gxaba	Registered pharmacist	P50121	O.Gxaba
29. Aviwe Khenku	Registered pharmacist	P52132	A.Khenku
30. Tshepo Tapolisi	Registered pharmacist	P50646	T.Tapolisi
31. Amahle Mazelem	Registered pharmacist	P44529	A.Mazelem
32. Qamani Ntshakaza	Registered pharmacist	P50262	Q.Ntshakaza

Dated: 22 January 2021

Correspondence:

Mr Samkelo Apleni

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