

# OBITUARY

## Professor Lungile Pepeta, MB BCh, DCH, FCPaed, Cert Paed Cardio, EdB, FSCAI

16 July 1974 - 7 August 2020



Prof. Lungile Pepeta was born and bred at Ludeke, a village just outside Bizana in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa (SA), where he grew up attending to cattle like all young men in the villages. He received his primary and secondary education in Bizana, and matriculated from Bizana Village High School in 1991. Lungile was drawn into the field of medicine immediately after matriculating. He joined the Faculty of Health Sciences of the then University of Transkei (now Walter Sisulu University (WSU)) in 1992 as a medical student, graduating with an MB ChB degree in 1997.

After qualifying as a medical doctor, he went on to do his internship in the then Mthatha General Hospital (now Nelson Mandela Academic Hospital) in 1998. The internship was followed by community service as a medical officer, undertaken at the Frontier Hospital in Queenstown and Dordrecht Hospital in 1999. It was then that he developed a passion for paediatrics, obtaining his Diploma in Child Health from the Colleges of Medicine of SA in October 1999. After community service, Lungile took up a position as a medical officer in

paediatrics at King Edward VIII Hospital in January 2000.

In July 2000, he joined the registrar training programme in paediatrics at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, obtaining the Fellowship in Paediatrics in 2003. After qualifying as a paediatrician, he moved back to the Eastern Cape, taking up a position as head of the Paediatrics Department at Frontier Hospital in July 2004.

In November 2005, he joined the Department of Paediatrics and Child Health at Chris Hani Baragwanath Academic Hospital as a consultant paediatrician, and started his training as a paediatric cardiologist under Prof. Cilliers at the University of the Witwatersrand. He obtained the Certificate in Paediatric Cardiology (SA) through the College of Paediatricians of SA in 2008. Due to his love for his birth province, he moved back to the Eastern Cape (Port Elizabeth) in 2009. He was appointed at Dora Nginza Hospital as a paediatric cardiologist and as head of the Department of Paediatrics in March 2009.

It was at Dora Nginza that Lungile started perfecting his craft in the catheterisation laboratory. He pioneered many novel interventional procedures, and was instrumental in attracting many subspecialists to join in building a formidable paediatrics department. Lungile started publishing scientific manuscripts, and was often invited to speak at both local and international conferences. In December 2014, he was admitted as a Fellow of the Society for Cardiovascular Angiography and Interventions, USA. He was the first to establish a paediatric cardiology unit in the Eastern Cape. At the time of his passing, Lungile had trained three paediatric cardiologists, one of whom has gone on to open a second paediatric cardiology unit in Mthatha.

In January 2016, he was appointed as associate professor of paediatrics at WSU's

Port Elizabeth satellite teaching unit. This was a befitting title for a man who was passionate about teaching. It was at this time that he started talking about the idea of being part of the establishment of a medical school at Nelson Mandela University (NMU). This became his passion, and he talked, walked, slept and dreamt of the medical school at NMU. His appointment as Executive Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences at NMU on 1 January 2017 did not come as a surprise to many.

Despite his busy schedule establishing a medical school, he served as the President of the Paediatric Cardiac Society of SA; vice-president of the SA Heart Association and executive member of the SA Paediatric Association. Shortly before his passing, Prof. Pepeta had been appointed as Chairperson of the Council for Medical Schemes, in June 2020.

At the time of his passing, Prof. Pepeta was completing his PhD at Stellenbosch University. To most of us, Lungile was a caring friend and colleague, whose infectious smile affected all those who dared to cross his path. He hated injustice, and was an advocate for equality, often being the voice for all the voiceless children with heart disease. He was a humble man from humble beginnings, dedicated to his profession, loyal to his friends and loving to his family. May we make sure that his legacy lives on.

Lungile is survived by his wife Noluvuyo, whom he loved and respected dearly, and two children, Kungawo and Lungaka, whom he loved and cherished.

**Prof. Hopewell Ntsinjana, MB BCh, FCPaed, PhD**

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