



Mrs Nomataru Gonste

Nomataru Gontse is a Public Health PhD candidate at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. She is a recipient of a scholarship under the Bongani Mayosi National Health Scholars Programme. She obtained her BSc in Audiology with academic honours in 2009 from the University of Cape Town. This was one of her proudest moments, mainly because, before she enrolled for a BSc in Audiology, the profession was unknown to her family and community. Moreover, Audiology did not have a name in her indigenous language. Since then, Nomataru has been passionate about working with patients from disadvantaged backgrounds, raising awareness about hearing loss and deafness and increasing better health care access for individuals with

hearing impairment. After completing her undergraduate studies, she worked for the public sector, serving communities from disadvantaged background and this afforded her an opportunity to engage with patients and get a better perspective of the challenges that they come across in accessing health care services. Challenges that were highlighted by patients from rural areas included lack of awareness about hearing loss and deafness as well as available options and services for the deaf. The lack of awareness resulted in children being identified and referred late or deaf children being kept at their homes and not accessing special schools. In 2016, she decided to further her studies by enrolling for a Master's in Early Childhood Intervention at the University of Pretoria. Her choice of study for her masters stemmed from concerns relating to early identification and early interventions in rural areas.

Nomataru is currently employed by the Department of Education in the Amathole East district in Eastern Cape. There she works with the schools and communities by creating awareness and empowering them to identify learners with hearing problems and referring them to her for assessments and management.

Her current PhD research project supervised by Dr Neethie Joseph is focused on developing a practice guideline to enhance communication between deaf children and their hearing families. Her first publication is in the pipeline and has had opportunities to present at conferences, one of which was an international conference on the Education of the Deaf and Hearing Impaired held in Paris, France in August 2022. Nomataru hopes to publish additional articles emanating from her PhD project. One of her goals is to start learning centres in rural areas where sign language is taught.

When she was asked about her support system she said, "My supervisor Dr Neethie Joseph and my family, my husband and my two daughters have been my greatest support system." Nomataru says without RCD funding, she would have struggled to complete her PhD studies. Furthermore, she iterates that the SAMRC provides hope for young, black researchers like herself who come from previously disadvantaged backgrounds.