

# HPCSA news: Winners of national Excellence in Healthcare Awards announced

Issued by [Greer van Zyl](#)

27 Nov 2007

HPCSA recognises the outstanding achievements of four healthcare professionals.



The award winners - going well beyond the call of duty.

The Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) recognised the outstanding achievements of four healthcare professionals during a glittering event hosted by the National Department of Health on Friday, 23 November. For the first time, the HPCSA also awarded a group prize which showcased the success of groups of practitioners working together to enhance healthcare access to historically disadvantaged communities.

The individual awards were made to the following practitioners:

**Prof. Banwari Meel** – Professor and Head of the Department of Forensic Medicine, Walter Sisulu University

Prof. Meel has earned international acclaim for his research on lung diseases in former mineworkers in the Eastern Cape. His work found that about 78% of former goldmine workers sampled were suffering from some form of lung disease, the highest rate ever recorded. Despite the high incidence, the mineworkers were dispersed without assistance throughout the rural areas.

By publicising his work in the national media, Prof. Meel advocated for the rights of these disadvantaged workers who were not only faced with medical challenges but also social challenges such as unemployment and poverty. As a result of his research, the mineworkers received R54 million as compensation. The recipient of an International Humanitarian Award for his work, as well as local recognition for excellent services towards poverty alleviation in the former Transkei area, Prof. Meel has clearly demonstrated his commitment and dedication to community health upliftment.

**Prof. Peter Beale** - Head of Paediatric Surgery at the University of the Witwatersrand

With over 30 years of dedicated service in public health to advancing paediatric surgical services to the Gauteng community, mainly at Johannesburg General and Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospitals, Prof. Beale has made a profound impact on the health and well-being of children and on the teaching and practice of paediatric surgery. He is regarded as possibly the world's most experienced paediatric surgeon in the widest field of paediatric and neonatal surgery and urology.

He was instrumental in establishing paediatric transplantation as a member of the Johannesburg transplant unit since 1980. Throughout his career he has demonstrated outstanding performance in healthcare delivery and dedication to quality healthcare. Prof. Beale is also honoured for his commitment to community outreach initiatives through his fund-raising work to improve state sector facilities in Johannesburg and for helping to establish a rape crisis unit at Alexandra Police Station.

**Prof. Kovin Naidoo** - Associate Professor at the Department of Optometry, University of KwaZulu-Natal

An internationally acclaimed optometrist, Prof. Kovin Naidoo has been credited with placing public health issues in primary eye care on the world optometric agenda, and has been instrumental in expanding optometry services in the public sector, both in South Africa and elsewhere in Africa. He was chosen as the International Optometrist of the Year for 2007. His proposal for an eye care programme in KwaZulu-Natal has seen over 130 000 children screened and 84 vision screeners trained, and his proposal for a District Eye Care Model and service delivery programme for KwaZulu-Natal has received a grant of R10 million for its implementation.

Through his initiative, a Global Resource Centre with offices in Africa and China has been established to supply optical appliances at an affordable rate to non-governmental organisations and governments. He initiated the KZN Eye Care Coalition which has brought together NGO's government, academia and other civil society organisations to address the crises in cataract services. Prof. Naidoo is honoured for his outstanding performance in healthcare delivery and his immense ambassadorial role in promoting eye healthcare.

**Ms Jennie McAdam** - Assistant Director and Senior Lecturer in Occupational Therapy at the University of Pretoria and Witbank Hospital in Mpumalanga

An occupational therapist who leads by example, Ms McAdam has played a key role in establishing Occupational Therapy Services throughout Mpumalanga. She has been responsible for establishing the Occupational Therapy department at Witbank Hospital, establishing and maintaining the psychiatric and community training programmes for final year Occupational Therapy students at the University of Pretoria that are done in Witbank, and facilitating the development of Occupational Therapy services in all 20 district hospitals in Mpumalanga.

Based on her research, her input resulted in positive changes to the national wheelchair tender. She has advocated strongly for the rights of Persons With Disabilities: risking her career, she unhesitatingly made a submission to the Human Rights Commission regarding the inhumane treatment of a patient. Ms McAdam is recognised for her outstanding performance in healthcare delivery, her sound professional behaviour, her heartfelt commitment to the principles of human rights and the Patient Charter, and for her unflinching dedication to improving access to healthcare for people with disabilities.

**The Group Award** was made to: The Allied Health Team, Van Velden Hospital, Tzaneen

This multi-disciplinary team embodies the spirit of the Group Award which aims to showcase the success of groups of practitioners working together to enhance healthcare access to historically disadvantaged communities. The group comprises practitioners from the fields of radiography, dietetics, speech/language and hearing, physiotherapy, dental therapy, psychology and environmental health. The team members are Ms L J Mokoena (Group Manager), Mr M W Chabangu, Ms T M Dunn, Ms C N Ezenwugo, Ms T V Lethlabi, Ms L Nauta, Ms T M Nkhwashu, Ms M P Nkwinika, Ms M Pohl, Mr X M Raphahlelo, Mr M T Rikhotso, Ms S M Tengu, and Ms S Thobela.

Over and above their responsibilities in the hospital, twice a week the dietician, speech therapist, physiotherapist and psychometrist visit remote clinics and do home visits in the rural areas, bringing services otherwise out of reach to disadvantaged communities. They regularly give talks on health promotion to patients as part of their routine, and also do weekly ward rounds as a group at Van Velden Hospital, Limpopo. These dedicated practitioners are flying the flag high by demonstrating the benefits of integrated healthcare and going well beyond the call of duty.

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