

Were it not for her determination to subspecialise in Maternal and Foetal Medicine against major odds, Pretoria obstetrician/gynaecologist, Dr Patricia Sebola's newly acquired scarce skills would have been lost to the healthcare sectors. She is now six months into her two-year training, rotating between Tembisa, Kalafong and Steve Biko Academic hospitals.

Dr Sebola is the mother of three young children. She began her initially self-funded subspecialist training in October 2018. After deciding she needed to "differentiate" herself as part of her academic growth, she applied to the Gauteng provincial health department to allocate her an unpaid Fellowship post. In December 2018, she breathed a sigh of relief, when her application for a Discovery Foundation Subspecialist grant was successful. She now divides her days equally between the Netcare Pretoria East Hospital where she has worked as an obstetrician/gynaecologist since 2013, and her State subspecialty training duties.

Because of Discovery Foundation funding, she is now able to convert her post from four years to two years.

For Dr Sebola, each weekday begins early in the morning with some academic reading or preparing for cases. "I try to go to bed by 21:00. I also do overnight hospital calls for two weekdays a month – so weekends are precious times to spend with the family," she adds. Her working day, currently at Kalafong Hospital, ends at 13:00 before she makes the 45- to 60-minute drive to her private practice in Pretoria East, which is luckily close to home.

Dr Sebola was raised in Phalaborwa, Limpopo, along with her younger brother, by her nursing sister mother and businessman father.

Her early education started in Rethabile Primary School in Namakgale township. She then attended the large Frans du Toit High School from 1993, with two other black children. "I have good memories of the education, but not the social part. Some of the schoolchildren were mean. The kind of thing that wouldn't survive in this day and age," she observes dryly. She studied medicine at the University of Pretoria, where she also later specialised, going on to become one of the first black doctors at Netcare Pretoria East Hospital.

I strongly wanted to subspecialise, so when Tembisa Hospital advertised an unpaid honorary post, I applied.

Persistence

*and faith win out to specialise
in maternal care*

DR PATRICIA SEBOLA

Subspecialist Award

University of Pretoria

Maternal and Foetal Medicine

Choosing posts by heart

She did her internship and Community Service at the Polokwane/Mankweng Academic Hospital Complex in Limpopo, continuing there as a medical officer.

She says she stayed on at the hospital because she loved working in the department of obstetrics and gynaecology, having fallen in love with the world of mothers and babies as an intern.

"Looking after pregnant women and bringing life into the world...it's a miracle of creation. I remember reading for the first time how a human being gets formed. I found it miraculous, God's work," she says.

Her biggest dream, she says without hesitating, is to "fully capacitate State Hospitals. If we could just manage our State Hospitals properly. I'd also love not to worry about resources and doctors being unable to get jobs. I never thought in a million years that a doctor or specialist would struggle to find a job," she says.

"I try and do something with my kids every weekend. It's not an easy task but I find a balance between studying, resting and spending time with the family."

I pray every day for God's guidance to live according to the purpose I have been destined for. The Discovery Foundation grant is a blessing that I am truly grateful to have received



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