

Kgopotso Rudolf Mononyane

15 March 1976–21 January 2021

44 years old

B Pharm (Wits) MBBCh (Wits) DA (SA) FCA (SA)



On Thursday 21 January 2021, Rudolf (“Ruddy” or “Ru” as he was affectionately called by his friends) was tragically killed when a Netcare 911 helicopter crashed on a medical retrieval flight for a COVID-19 patient. He was aboard as one of the specialist medical team to establish ECMO, as a transfer from Bergville (where there is no ECMO unit) in KZN to Milpark Hospital in Johannesburg.

Kgopotso Rudolf Mononyane was born to Paulinah and Joseph Mononyane as the second of five siblings. He started school at Mmatlhame Primary School (where his dad Joseph was the principal), proceeded to Letlopi Middle School then completed Matric at Sekitla High School in Mathibestad with flying colours. He grew up in modest surroundings in apartheid South Africa.

After receiving a full bursary for engineering, Rudolf took 2 weeks to realise that engineering was not his calling or passion and enrolled for Pharmacy at Wits. His decision to forgo a full bursary and popular support in favour of pursuing work in healthcare meant he took personal responsibility to fund and pursue his decided path. After completing his degree in pharmacy in 1998 and after one month in practice, it was clear that his passion was not satisfied. He applied and got accepted to study medicine at Wits. This insatiable appetite for excellence epitomised Rudolf as we all knew him and persisted until the day he died.

He attained his MBBCh (Wits) in 2002, completed his internship at Mankweng Hospital and Community Service at 1 Military Hospital. He decided to pursue anaesthesia as a speciality, obtained his Diploma in Anaesthesia in 2005 and his Fellowship in 2009 on the Wits circuit with his base hospital being Chris Hani Baragwanath Academic Hospital. He remained in the department for 3 years and moved to full time private practice in 2013. He developed special interests in airway management and regional anaesthesia and was accomplished and certified in cardiac echocardiography.

Rudolf, AKA Gandalf the wise and witty, was a person who had risen to the pinnacle of his personal and professional life through talent, hard work, sincerity, emotional intelligence and living and practicing his religious and moral code. He was a fine and popular teacher remaining involved in College and Societal work in private practice. He was a committed Part 1 examiner in the College of Anaesthetists for over a decade. He was also involved in numerous training initiatives for upskilling anaesthetists locally, in outlying areas and in other African countries as far afield as Mauritius, for anaesthetic skills such as airway management, regional anaesthesia and ultrasound use. He was also committed to research as a regular reviewer for the South African Journal of Anaesthesia and Analgesia.

Rudolf was elected to serve on SASA Council in 2016 and joined the Private Practice Business Unit in the same year. He was particularly passionate in outreach and ensuring education and training was made available to underserved areas through training workshops. He was a vociferous advocate for quality patient care, pursuing patient accountability by all stakeholders in the health sector and that of our colleagues to our profession.

During his time on SASA Council he also achieved qualification as a certified Mediator. He believed strongly and promoted meritocracy, inclusivity, and the pursuit of excellence in the society and with respect to diversity in the profession.

In his private practice, Rudolf reached his position as one of the pre-eminent anaesthesiologists of his generation. His obvious prodigious talent meant that he was soon head hunted by both the cardiac surgery and cardiac transplantation unit at Milpark Hospital and the solid organ transplant unit at Wits Donald Gordon Medical Centre – where he has served with brilliance and dedication until his tragic passing.

In his “private” time, Rudolf pushed many boundaries. He completed the Comrades Marathon, summited Kilimanjaro, and continually challenged himself to achieve. He was a founder

member and chairperson of the Game Changers Coalition – a business initiative remote from the healthcare space.

All of his accolades, achievements and professional endeavours came a distant second to his absolute pride in, and dedication to, his family – Kgomotso (his wife) and his two children, KJ (Kgopotso Junior) and Kgatliso. They were Rudolf's reason for being, reason to work and reason to succeed. He shared this pride unapologetically with those that he established relationships with.

Since his passing, the most striking revelation about Rudolf as family, friends and colleagues have connected, has been his dedication and effort when it came to personal relationships. He made particular effort to ensure all were taken care of – emotionally and financially. This included his work on the PPBU and SASA, to his collegial and family relationships. *"Ruddy has this unconditional love that knew no bounds. He had a way of making people feel special as if they were the only ones that existed in his life. Ruddy was never shy with his love and affection for his family, friends, and colleagues.... He managed to teach me about forgiveness, being true to oneself, being authentic, about unconditional love and about using our time here on earth wisely."*

Rudolf did not allow himself to be defined by the arbitrary boxes created by society. Not only a man, but a person caring for his fellow people. Not an anaesthetist but a caring, capable, excellent professional, not a doctor but a father, husband, friend, mentor and teacher who also practiced medicine. Not a businessman but

a person in pursuit of purpose and meaning through business, proud of his history and heritage and a proponent for diversity, inclusivity and working hard for success as a collective with all welcome and included. For the profession and society, a senior member of the PPBU relates that Rudolf's absence is a loss, the full and long-term impact of which we cannot fully appreciate.

On behalf of our Executive Committee, our Council, the Private Practice Business Unit Committee and all our members, we mourn Rudolf's absence and devastating loss. We extend our condolences to Kgomotso, Kgopotso and Kgatliso, to Paulinah and Joseph and to Mpotseng, Lentswe, Phokeng and Kgothatso and the Mononyane and Madiba families. We thank you for sharing Rudolf with our collective.

Rudolf – it is hard to fathom you aren't physically with us. Hard to accept. We miss your presence, your face, your laugh, your wit, your dedication, your expertise, your absolute sense of right and wrong and your person.

Robala hantle abuti

This obituary was made possible with contributions from Anthony Beeton, Caroline Corbett, Palesa Mogane, Busi Mrara, Sekai Ndemera, Thube Ngubane, Andre Roux and Lance Lasersohn.