

Dr Shalen Cheddie

15 March 1982 – 25 November 2022

Shalen Cheddie passed away on 25 November 2022 following a two-year-long illness. This brought a premature end to the career of a remarkable surgeon who achieved a legendary status on account of his burgeoning academic standing, undiluted commitment to public service delivery and exceptional professional and ethical conduct.

Shalen was born on 15 March 1982 and raised in Reservoir Hills, Durban, where he undertook his early education. A scion of the Cheddie clan, he was a 4th generation Grimitiya (indentured Indian). Always inspired and guided by his culture and religiosity, his standing, given the historical and discriminatory challenges faced by our community, is a testament to innate perseverance, never yielding to foisted obstacles and a call to duty.

Shalen completed the MBChB degree (*summa cum laude*) in 2005 with innumerable awards at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). Following internship and community service at Baragwanath and St Benedictine Hospitals respectively, Shalen pursued his surgical training at his alma mater.

During his general surgery training, Shalen further showed his immense academic talents. He received the Brebner (2009) and Douglas (2012) awards for the best intermediate and final college of surgeons examination candidate respectively, and completed his Master of Medicine degree via published research – achievements made even more remarkable by their attainment in only four years.

In 2013, Shalen was appointed as Consultant Surgeon at Madadeni Hospital and in 2016 he took over as Head of Department. The allure of private practice, the distraction of remunerative work outside of public service, or the glitz of subspecialisation was not for him. He was totally committed to the Madadeni circuit, functioning effectively as a general surgeon without complaints despite the resource constraints. He brought succour and hope to the expectations of the poor and marginalised communities of Madadeni, Newcastle, Dannhauser and Dundee in rural northern KwaZulu-Natal. I can attest that he undertook his service-related and academic responsibilities and duties with alacrity. This approach to his duties was always based on deontological ethics and never motivated by the potential of any encomium. It is a travesty



that despite our motivations, his unparalleled contributions and achievements during this short career did not receive greater recognition.

During his Madadeni tenure, Shalen had an honorary appointment with the Department of Surgery, UKZN and supervised six Master of Medicine degrees and produced 23 publications before being ravaged by his illness. Despite these achievements, Shalen declined academic appointments to his alma mater, citing the satisfaction and affinity he developed for the rural communities he served.

Shalen will be recalled as being humble, even-tempered, self-effacing and impeccably mannered. At all times he showed an admirable respect for his patients, teachers, peers, and loyalty to the Department of Surgery, UKZN.

Shalen Cheddie's legacy provides a ternary for surgical practice in our resource-constrained country. His approach merges equally, the acquisition and execution of a skill set appropriate for the majority of our patients, with the dissemination and production of knowledge relevant to our services, undertaken by altruism and sensitivity to our societal challenges.

Shalen is survived by his wife Vereesha, his parents Anand and Rameka Cheddie and elder brother, Nishaan.

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