

OBITUARY

**Kgopotso Rudolf Mononyane, BPharm, MB BCh, DA (SA), FCA (SA),
15 March 1976 - 21 January 2021**



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 members to establish extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO) as a transfer from Bergville (where there is no ECMO unit) in KwaZulu-Natal to Netcare 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 and completed Matric with flying colours at Sekitla High School in Mathibestad. He grew up in modest surroundings in apartheid South Africa (SA).

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 the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) in Johannesburg. 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 1 month in practice, it was clear that his passion was not satisfied. He applied and

was 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 MB BCh in 2002, completed his internship at Mankweng Hospital and community service at 1 Military Hospital, Pretoria. He decided to pursue anaesthesia as a specialty, obtained the Diploma in Anaesthetics 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 practising his religious and moral code. He was a fine and popular teacher, remaining involved in College and societal work while 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 *Southern African Journal of Anaesthesia and Analgesia*.

Rudolf was elected to serve on the SA Society of Anaesthesiologists (SASA) council in 2016 and joined the Private Practice Business Unit (PPBU) in the same year. He was particularly passionate regarding outreach and ensuring that education and training were made available to under-served areas through training workshops. He was a vociferous advocate for quality patient care, pursuing patient accountability by all stakeholders in the health sector and of our colleagues to our profession.

During his time on the SASA council, he also achieved a qualification as a certified mediator. He believed strongly in and promoted meritocracy, inclusivity, and the

pursuit of excellence in the society and with regard to diversity in the profession.

In his private practice, Rudolf was 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 served with brilliance and dedication until his tragic passing.

In his 'private' time, Rudolf pushed many boundaries. He completed the Comrades Marathon, submitted 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 who 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 had 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 only an anaesthetist, but a caring, capable, excellent professional, not only a doctor, but a father, husband, friend,

mentor and teacher, who also practised 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 everyone 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 PPBU committee and all our membership, we mourn Rudolf's absence

and our devastating loss. We extend our condolences to Kgomo, Kgopotso and Kgatliso, to Paulina and Joseph, 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.

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Lance Lasersohn,

on behalf of all of your friends and colleagues