

HISTORY OF MEDICINE

The Hamilton Naki Clinical Scholarship, 2007 - 2011

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Foundation of the Scholarship

The Hamilton Naki Scholarship was introduced because of the shortage of qualified academic leaders in South African medical schools, especially for academic clinicians from previously disadvantaged backgrounds. There were only a handful of African academic doctors with a significant published record of scholarship in South Africa. If academic physicians from the whole population were not recruited and trained, South Africa would lose its ability to train high-quality health practitioners. To address these deficiencies, the Netcare Physician Partnerships Trust established a scholarship to produce world-class academics in all medical specialties to teach and conduct research comparable to other parts of the world.

Mr Hamilton Naki was born on 26 June 1926 in Centane in the Transkei.¹ He had a standard 6 (now grade 8) education, came to Cape Town at the age of 18 and worked as a gardener at the University Cape Town. Robert Goetz, Professor of Surgical Research, attracted him to the research laboratory, where Mr Naki anaesthetised animals and helped with experimental surgery. He assisted Chris Barnard with research and experimental work preceding and following the historic first heart transplant in 1967. He continued assisting with heart, liver, kidney and other transplants in the J S Marais Laboratory, where generations of surgeons did research and received training from Mr Naki. Many became academics in this country and abroad; over a dozen became professors of surgery and heads of departments locally and internationally.

Mr Naki had an amazing ability to learn anatomical names and recognise anomalies, and became principal surgical assistant of the laboratory because of his skill and dexterity.² He received an honorary Master of Science degree from the University of Cape Town in 2003 as 'an extraordinary teacher and surgical craftsman',³ and was presented with the Order of Mapungubwe in Bronze, South Africa's highest honour. He died on 29 May 2005 at the age of 78 years.

The Hamilton Naki Clinical Scholarship

The Physician Partnership Trust, established by the Health Partners for Life as part of the black economic empowerment programme of Netcare Ltd, established a scholarship to support historically disadvantaged South Africans to undertake high-level research. This Hamilton Naki Clinical Scholarship was named after an extraordinary man and teacher who walked the same path. It is awarded to medical specialists to pursue doctoral and postdoctoral studies in clinical fields of their choice. A selection committee comprising academic physicians from the eight medical schools nationally and a member appointed by

Netcare Ltd assists with the selection of suitable, worthy candidates.

The Hamilton Naki Clinical Scholarship aims to select candidates of high academic calibre who demonstrate a capacity and commitment to make a difference to academic healthcare in South Africa; provide financial support to undertake full-time doctoral or postdoctoral training in leading institutions locally or overseas for 3 or more years; support candidates to establish themselves in South Africa or commence an independent academic career upon completion of research training for a further period of 1 or more years; and to provide such other support to the candidate as determined by the Selection Committee and approved by the Trustees.

Eligibility criteria include South African citizens from historically disadvantaged backgrounds who are registered as specialists or sub-specialists with the Health Professions Council of South Africa. Applications may be nominations by an academic institution or individuals may apply. The applicant must have identified a research project worthy of doctoral or postdoctoral study. The project must be funded and the applicant must have selected a supervisor with an appropriate research infrastructure and facilities. The pursuit of a PhD degree or postdoctoral research studies must be done full time, for which the Scholarship provides funding. These objectives are in line with the recommendations of the Academy of Science of South Africa for revitalising clinical research in South Africa.⁴

The selection process comprises calling for applications in the national press, the selection committee reviews the applications, and eligible applicants are short-listed for an interview.

Hamilton Naki Clinical Scholars, 2007 - 2011

The first scholarship was awarded in 2007 to Dr Carol Hlela, a dermatologist. She successfully completed her PhD in immunology at Green Templeton College, University of Oxford, UK. The 2008 scholarship was awarded to Dr Bonga Chiliza who is finalising his doctoral thesis in psychiatry at Stellenbosch University. The 2009 recipient, Dr Mushi Johannes Matjila, is doing his doctorate in obstetrics at the University of Cape Town. In 2010 Dr Deliwe Precious Ngwezi received the scholarship to do her doctorate in paediatric cardiology in Canada. Dr Rudzani Muloiswa is the 2011 scholarship recipient and will pursue his doctoral studies in paediatrics at the University of Cape Town. These clinical scholars, and those to be appointed in the future, have the potential to transform the quality of medical science in South Africa over the decades to come.

Conclusion

We urge deans of South African medical schools to nominate applicants for the Hamilton Naki Clinical Scholarship from all medical fields and to ensure that faculty members are aware of its requirements. As selectors we are confident of the successful launch of the Scholarship and its contribution to developing a new generation of academic physicians in South Africa.

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