



OFM Family Focus: South African Society of Physiotherapy celebrates 100 years.

Translation

Host (Jolanda):

This morning on "The Sound of Your Life," it's a great pleasure for me to welcome Koos Bierman and join him in his role as the marketer for the South African Society of Physiotherapy. Koos, welcome to OFM.

Koos:

Thank you, Jolanda. It's a great privilege to be here with you.

Host:

Today, our focus is on inspiring people—not necessarily to choose physiotherapy as a profession to study one day, but also to motivate people who may be on a journey with poor vision or blindness, to show them that there is absolutely hope. Koos, let's start at the beginning: how did your journey start as someone with impaired vision or as a blind person, and how did you qualify yourself?

Koos:

Yolanda, I have a genetic eye condition, which means I gradually lost my vision. From a young age, I began losing my sight, and unfortunately, there's no treatment for it. So now I'm also known as the "blind physio from Bloemfontein." At one stage in my life, I tried various things, lost a lot of money, and worked in IT.

But at one point, I decided to qualify myself and establish a profession. Physiotherapy was the profession that, even as I lost my sight, I could still practice independently and as an individual. For me, physiotherapy allowed me to function as a top professional and still contribute to society by helping people. In the end, the heart of physiotherapy is about helping people. For me, as a blind person, it's wonderful that when I place my hands on someone, it's to help them.

Host:

Koos, from what I hear, you have an absolute passion for what you do. You work with your hands and bring healing to people. This, I think, will inspire our listeners today. My question is, why do you think students should consider physiotherapy as a career or pursue it as a profession?

Koos:

Yolanda, I think, especially with the National Health Insurance coming—although no one knows exactly how it will unfold—we just know it's going to happen. Physiotherapy is such a broad field where you can work in organizations. There is a wide field where you can create your niche, as I would put it. Physiotherapists aim to help people improve their quality of life. So for someone writing their matric exams, physiotherapy is a great option to consider, and I think there are several universities across the country. Our university in Bloemfontein is a great option to explore, and I would suggest speaking to people there about the possibilities.

Host:

Koos, I've always wanted to ask someone this: when a person has had sight and then begins to lose it, do you see images in your mind? How do you experience memories?

Koos:

This is something I've always wanted to explain to people. Many who know me can hardly believe I'm blind. They think I can see more than I actually do. As I move through a space, I create a mental picture of where a chair or a table is. I have an idea of what colours are, although recently, I learned from my wife that there are more shades of pink than I thought. I used to think pink was just pink. But I now live in my mind, so to speak. Some people might think I'm rude, but it's because I live inside my head. I see things in my thoughts and confirm what I feel with my hands. I have a good idea of what colours are, but I don't always know what people's faces look like. So, if you tell me what you look like, that's how I'll imagine you.

Host:

Koos Bierman is with us today, and I challenge you to look at your life differently and live with gratitude every day. Koos now works in the marketing portfolio for the South African Society of Physiotherapy in the Free State, but the association turns 100 years old this year—an incredible milestone!

Koos:

Yes, we are very proud of that. There are very few professional bodies or organisations that can say they're 100 years old. We have such a rich history. If you think about it, we were established just after World War I, when soldiers returned. For the first time in history, there was a large group of people who were severely injured from the war. Physiotherapy started as gymnastics and massage therapy, and over time, it developed into what it is today. So, over the last 100 years, we've built a rich history as an organisation, and we're very proud of it.

Our official anniversary is on December 11th, and we hope to celebrate with a big party in the Free State. I'm not sure exactly what will happen yet or how it will unfold, but we are planning something big for the end of the year.

Host:

Koos, what services does the association provide to physiotherapists in the Free State, and is there a need for public involvement? What can people do to support you?

Koos:

Jolanda, we are an organization for physiotherapists, run by physiotherapists. Most of the work in the association is done by volunteers, but we also have staff who work for the association. We look after the interests of physiotherapists and help organize courses. We need to earn points to maintain our registration with the health council every year. The association ensures that there are accredited courses available for physiotherapists so that the public receives the highest quality of care.

We also help young physiotherapists establish their practices and take care of logistical issues. Additionally, we try to be involved in community projects. For example, we provide services at sporting events like the Comrades Marathon, where students participate every year. We also get involved in local Bloemfontein events, such as walks and other sporting events, where the physiotherapy association helps by providing services to support people so they can enjoy the events.

Host:

Koos, I've learned today that you're not just sharing your story but also motivating people. You prioritize health and well-being, and that's amazing. I truly applaud you for that.

Koos:

Thank you, Jolanda. We appreciate the opportunity.

Host:

How can people get in touch with you and find out more about what's happening this year, like the anniversary celebration and the colouring competition?

Koos:

We have a big project at the moment. We're launching a colouring competition for the younger generation. We want the kids to get involved. People can keep an eye on the local newspapers in Bloemfontein, or they can contact us. Schools, especially primary schools, are welcome to reach out. We'll have a great prize for the winner of the colouring competition. It's not necessarily about staying within the lines, but we want to give everyone a fair chance to win the prize. Keep an eye out for that competition. People can also contact our office in the Free State via email at freestate@saphysio.co.za.

Host:

Of course, you can read more under "Lifestyle" at OFM.co.za. Koos Bierman from the South African Society of Physiotherapy, celebrating 100 years this year. Koos, have a blessed day, and thank you for joining us.

Koos:

Thank you, Jolanda, and we hope to see you all soon."