

ISSUE 1, February 2025

# PHYSIOSA

MAGAZINE

FOR EVERY PHYSIO WHO CARES



CLAWBACK  
CORNER



WORLD SPINE DAY

KZN DRONE FUN

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# EDITOR'S NOTE

Welcome to the first issue of PhysioSA for 2025!

As we step into a new year filled with opportunities and challenges, this issue reflects on the remarkable resilience and innovation of the physiotherapy profession. The past year has been a testament to the incredible work of physiotherapists across South Africa and beyond, as we navigated evolving healthcare landscapes and embraced opportunities for growth and collaboration.

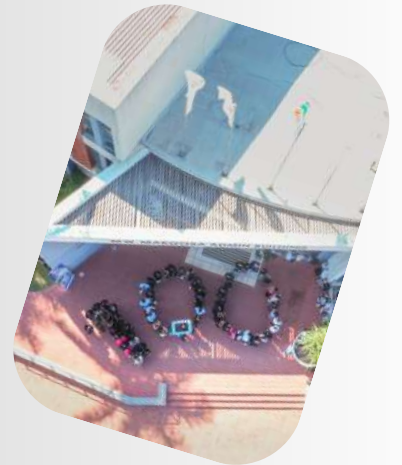
Last year, we celebrated the centenary of the South African Society of Physiotherapy (SASP) — a monumental milestone that underscores a century of dedication to advancing the profession, empowering practitioners, and transforming lives through physiotherapy.

With membership renewal for SASP open, we encourage you to join us in strengthening our community and amplifying our collective voice. Together, we can advocate for the role of physiotherapy in promoting health and wellness nationwide while advancing the profession to new heights.

As always, we invite you to contribute your thoughts, stories, and successes. Let's make 2025 a year of growth, unity, and celebration for physiotherapy in South Africa.

Here's to a year of inspiration and impact!

*Diana Coetzer*



## CLAWBACK CORNER

# FORENSIC AUDITS: SAFEGUARDING YOUR PRACTICE WITH ETHICAL BUSINESS PRACTICES

Karen Gibbs



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## Classified

Durban Sports Medicine – a multidisciplinary practice with 26-year history. Full-time physiotherapist needed to work for practice in a learned multidisciplinary set up as well as in a gym environment. Huge mentoring and upskilling programmes internally.

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# Members only



# MAKING WAVES: THE THERAPEUTIC POWER OF AQUATIC THERAPY IN REHABILITATION

Written by Kirsty Marot and Arshiya Dahal



Aquatic therapy is an exceptional therapeutic approach frequently utilised at Life Rehabilitation, located within Life Entabeni Hospital.

In our acute inpatient rehabilitation unit, aquatic therapy has become a favourite among patients and therapists alike. It's a day patients eagerly anticipate, often leaving the pool with smiles on their faces. The shift from land-based therapy, combined with the pool's warmth and the camaraderie fostered in group settings, creates a truly enjoyable and beneficial experience.



Patient showing the joy of being in the pool.



The sensory input of the aquatic environment.

## What's the impact?

Understanding the impact of aquatic therapy requires examining the unique properties of water and its therapeutic benefits. One key property is buoyancy, the upward force exerted by water that counteracts gravity. This allows patients to move more freely in the water compared to on land, where mobility may be limited. Buoyancy also partially supports body weight, reducing stress on the lower limbs. Other advantages include water's natural resistance to movement, hydrostatic pressure, and thermal properties, with pool temperatures maintained between 33°C and 35°C.

## The pool environment

At our facility, aquatic therapy has proven effective for a wide range of conditions, including strokes, orthopaedic cases, paediatrics, and spinal cord injuries. Stroke patients, in particular, benefit significantly, especially when focusing on gait rehabilitation. The pool environment allows us to address various components of gait, such as dynamic standing balance, weight shifting, strength, knee control, and coordination. Research highlights improvements in balance, coordination, and muscle strength among stroke patients, with aquatic therapy often surpassing land-based interventions in these areas. Additionally, the reduced fear of falling in the pool fosters confidence, especially when working on standing balance and gait training. The buoyancy of water facilitates movements that are challenging on land, while its resistance helps build strength and endurance and improve coordination. By alleviating the load on the lower limbs, the hemiplegic knee stabilises more effectively during the stance phase of walking.



## Healing properties

Walking independently is the most common rehabilitation goal following a stroke. However, 50% of stroke patients experience gait disability six months post-stroke. Research indicates that water's physical properties enhance physiological conditioning and may expedite walking recovery, making gait rehabilitation a critical focus for improving outcomes.

Aquatic therapy also provides a supportive environment for the hemiplegic upper limb. Patients often find the warm water soothing for pain or discomfort, with the combination of warmth and buoyancy facilitating passive and active mobilisation. Frequently, patients remark, "My arm feels so much more comfortable" or "It feels so much easier to move." Furthermore, the thermal properties and buoyancy of water help reduce muscle tone, making active movement and stretching more manageable than on land.

## Group therapy

In our rehabilitation unit, regular aquatic therapy group sessions create opportunities for both physical and social benefits. These sessions are characterised by laughter, fun, and social interaction among patients facing similar challenges. Activities like pool noodle races or ball games generate lively atmospheres and build strong peer connections that often extend beyond the pool. Research shows that aquatic exercise groups for patients with hemiplegia achieve better quality of life and balance compared to land-based exercise groups.



Patient using buoyancy to strengthen her hemiplegic upper limb.



Group therapy session.

## Benefits galore

Aquatic therapy's psychological benefits are equally significant. Studies reveal that aquatic exercise positively impacts patients with neurological disorders. Enhanced freedom of movement and functional motor skills in the water contribute to improved physical and emotional well-being.

From a therapist's perspective, aquatic therapy is invaluable in an acute rehabilitation setting. By leveraging water's unique properties, therapists can address activity limitations and achieve goals more effectively than land-based therapy. This approach remains an essential part of our treatment framework, helping us deliver optimal outcomes and enhance the quality of life for patients living with disabilities.



Therapy fun.



# MAKING A DIFFERENCE ON THE GREENS

## LITTLE EDEN GOLF DAY



**Shanice Basdeo**

On a beautiful day filled with camaraderie and purpose, the Southern Gauteng (SG) branch of the Special Interest Group in Sports Physiotherapy (SPG) proudly lent its support to the Little Eden Golf Day. This remarkable fundraising event was dedicated to supporting Little Eden, a nonprofit organisation (NPO) that provides care for 300 mentally and physically challenged residents.



Teamwork makes the dream work.

Held at a picturesque golf course, the event drew enthusiastic golfers, sponsors, and supporters from all walks of life, united by the common goal of making a meaningful impact. The SG branch of SPG played an active role by offering physiotherapy-related expertise to enhance the experience for players and attendees.

Little Eden's mission to create a loving and supportive environment for its residents deeply resonates with the values of the physiotherapy profession. By ensuring that these individuals receive the care and dignity they deserve, Little Eden continues to be a beacon of hope for families and communities.



On-course management.

The funds raised during the golf day will go a long way in supporting the daily needs of the residents, including healthcare, therapy, and specialised care services. Events like this highlight the power of collaboration and community involvement in driving positive change. Here's to more opportunities to blend sport, physiotherapy, and philanthropy in the year ahead!



Top tee setup.



Expert assistance.



# AGM 2024 AWARDS CONGRATULATIONS



Province of the year - KwaZulu Natal.



SIG of the year - Neurological Rehabilitation Physiotherapy Group

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Mental health awareness in the Northern Cape.

The team at Kakamas Hospital once again held a combined health day this year, celebrating all healthcare professions. This event, known as the Rainbow Games, was designed to bring colleagues together in a fun and uplifting way. Since October is Mental Health Awareness Month, the colour green was chosen as the theme for the day.

The Rainbow Games were created specifically for healthcare workers, giving them an opportunity to relax, laugh, and enjoy a break from their demanding roles. Working in the healthcare system is challenging, and for many, it takes a toll on their mental well-being. According to the South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG), 50% of employees are diagnosed with depression and require time off work as a result. Additionally, a 2023 article by the Environmental Assessment Practitioners Association of South Africa (EAPASA) reported that mental health issues significantly impact productivity, with employee absences due to depression costing the South African economy an estimated R19 billion annually.

With this in mind, the Rainbow Games were even more meaningful. Exercise and laughter are among the best natural remedies for boosting mood, and the event was structured to encourage teamwork and support. Participants formed teams of four and engaged in various activities that required strategic thinking, cooperation, and plenty of encouragement. The day was filled with joy, laughter, and a sense of camaraderie as everyone momentarily escaped the pressures of their daily work. After the games, the winning team was announced, followed by a colour run. In honour of Mental Health Awareness Month, each participant received green powder paint to throw at one another, symbolizing support for mental well-being. Some superheroes wear capes—others, for a day, were proudly covered in green. 🦸‍♀️

# NC MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

Liezel Snyman



Great catch-ups with colleagues.



Smiles all round.



A shower of hreen.

# FALL IN LOVE WITH PHYSIO AGAIN

DALE LINSTRÖM

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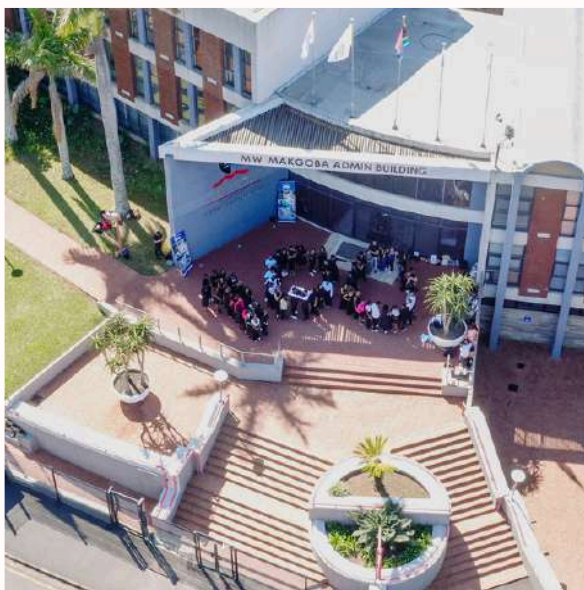


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## A CENTURY OF PHYSIOTHERAPY: CELEBRATING THE PAST, INSPIRING THE FUTURE

**KZN GETS THEIR DRONE ON! — SHUAIB RASOOL**



100 years of physiotherapy.



3rd and 4th years forming 100.

As part of KwaZulu-Natal's centenary celebrations, the GEC sought to involve the future of physiotherapy in marking 100 years of the profession in South Africa. The provincial GEC was invited to attend the fourth-year research presentation and awards day, seizing the opportunity to engage with the students and commemorate this milestone. During the event, we gathered the fourth-year class—along with some third-year students—to form the number 100, symbolizing a century of physiotherapy excellence. The day was filled with insightful and thought-provoking research, showcasing the dedication and talent of the students. As we celebrate 100 years of physiotherapy, we also look ahead to the future of the profession. Judging by the passion and intelligence of this class, the future of physiotherapy is in excellent hands! 🦋

[CLICK HERE](#)



Students join in on the celebrations.



# DEFYING LIMITS AND REDEFINING POSSIBILITIES IN PHYSIOTHERAPY

**MEET KOOS BIERMAN, THE “BLIND PHYSIO” FROM BLOEMFONTEIN, WHO REFUSES TO LET VISUAL IMPAIRMENT STAND IN HIS WAY. IN THIS INTERVIEW, HE SHARES HIS INSPIRING JOURNEY AND MESSAGE OF PERSEVERANCE.**

Cilna Oosthuizen

## **A Challenging Childhood and a Life-Altering Diagnosis**

*Tell us about your childhood. When did you realise you had a visual impairment, and how did it affect your schooling?*

I was born with normal eyesight, but at the age of seven, my mother noticed something was wrong. When I misbehaved and had to confess my "sins," she expected me to look her in the eyes. But no matter how hard I tried, I just couldn't. At first, she thought I was being dishonest. However, when I also started struggling in school, I underwent an eye assessment, which revealed that I had a degenerative eye condition called Stargardt's disease. With no treatment available, my vision deteriorated rapidly. I had to leave home and attend a school for visually impaired children in Pretoria, where I later transitioned to learning Braille. Eventually, I moved to the Pioneer School for the Blind in Worcester to continue my education.

The diagnosis turned my world upside down. I had to adapt to being far from home, learn to read with my fingers, and accept that I was different from my friends. At first, I rebelled, but over time—and with the support of incredible people—I found myself. I realised that hardship is a universal part of life, and my challenge just happened to be my eyesight.

More importantly, I learned that the real limitations weren't my own—they were the ones imposed by society. People told me I couldn't do things simply because I was blind, so I did them anyway.

## **Breaking Barriers in Physiotherapy**

*Why did you choose physiotherapy, and how did you manage to study a profession that many assume relies heavily on sight?*

Physiotherapy wasn't originally on my radar. I grew up with an entrepreneurial mindset, running a small fiberglass manufacturing business after school. Later, I worked in banking, helping to make financial services more accessible for people with disabilities. However, when the bank I worked for went bankrupt, I found myself unemployed and in search of a new career.

I knew I needed a profession where I could excel even if I went completely blind. I also wanted a qualification that would allow me to work anywhere in the world—and most importantly, I wanted to be among the best in my field, despite my impairment. Physiotherapy met all these criteria. I applied to every physiotherapy program in South Africa, but only the University of the Western Cape (UWC) accepted visually impaired students, on the condition that I could function independently. With no contacts or support system in Cape Town, I boarded a train from Pretoria and took a leap of faith.



Koos Bierman

Studying at UWC was both one of the hardest and most rewarding experiences of my life. The support I received helped shape me into the physiotherapist I am today. People who can see often assume that sight is essential in physiotherapy, but as physiotherapists, we use our hands to heal, not our eyes. The physiotherapy logo itself is a pair of hands—not eyes. In fact, sometimes, seeing can be the real disability.

## Thriving as a Physiotherapist

*Where do you currently work?*

I work at Universitas Tertiary Hospital in Bloemfontein, primarily in the outpatient department. Previously, I worked independently in hospital wards, but after COVID-19 and as my vision further deteriorated, it became more challenging to navigate the dynamic hospital environment. Moving to outpatients allows me to continue my work effectively.

I specialise in neuromusculoskeletal physiotherapy with a strong interest in the fascial system and movement. Additionally, I run a small private practice after hours and teach CPD courses.

## Overcoming Daily Challenges

*What are some of the biggest challenges you face?*

I believe that every challenge presents an opportunity, so I don't see obstacles as negatives but rather as chances for growth. The biggest challenge for anyone with a disability is society's ignorance. People need to understand that disability is not about what someone can't do—it's about finding different ways to achieve the same goals.

Thanks to technological advancements, the world is becoming more accessible, and I'm excited about the future. Everyone faces struggles, and I have my fair share, but it's how we respond to them that defines us.

## A Message to Aspiring Physiotherapists with Disabilities

*You're an inspiration to anyone who is differently abled. What advice would you give to someone with a disability who dreams of becoming a physiotherapist?*

Physiotherapy is an incredibly rewarding career, and yes, it is possible to build a successful practice as a visually impaired physiotherapist. But it requires hard work, and it won't be easy—nor should it be.

That said, it's important to balance dreams with reality. I love Formula 1 racing, and if I had my way, I'd be a Ferrari driver. But some things simply aren't feasible. If you are passionate about physiotherapy and truly believe you can do the work, go for it. If you find that your specific challenges make it too difficult, then explore other ways to fulfill your purpose.

Helping others recover doesn't have to happen in one way. If life gives you lemons, don't just make lemonade—sometimes, you need to grab the tequila, too. 🍹



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Fun times.



Proud to be a physio.



OFM interview.



# WORLD SPINAL DAY 2024 TYGERBERG HOSPITAL

Chrysanthé Ismail



Dr Maseer, Chrysanthé and Dr Africa.

Thank you to the SASP for the promotional goods that helped make our World Spinal Day event at the Advanced Orthopaedics Training Centre (AOTC) auditorium a success. The event, attended by orthopaedic outpatient nursing staff under Sr. Fredericks, included a special guest—a young woman who underwent scoliosis reconstruction surgery in 2022 and made a full recovery. Dr. Nomsa Africa, the first graduating coloured orthopaedic consultant specializing in spines, spoke on the importance of staying active and available medical interventions, including physiotherapy. Dr. S. Maseer, senior spinal consultant, discussed scoliosis, its clinical presentation, and surgical management. I had the privilege of interviewing my former patient about her experience, from the emotional toll of living with scoliosis to the relief and happiness she felt post-surgery. Her story moved everyone and highlighted the incredible impact of the entire spinal team—from surgeons to rehab specialists and nursing staff—on patients' quality of life. It was also a valuable learning experience for our final-year physiotherapy student, who observed her rehabilitation journey from hospital stay to discharge. 🦋

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# BRIGHT MINDS, BIG HEARTS

## COLLEGE HILL PREP'S COLOURING COMPETITION & FUNDRAISER FOR EJAY SOLOMONS

Written by Dr Dīana Coetzer

College Hill Preparatory School in Kariega hosted a colouring competition on 26 November to raise funds for Ejay Solomons. As we set up in the school hall, excited little faces peeked in, eager for the prize handover and the fun they associate with "Physios."

The event kicked off with a warm welcome from school principal Mrs. B. Marais, followed by an energetic introduction to Jingle Bells, setting a lively tone for the day. After the prizes were awarded, Ejay and his mother joined us to receive a donation of R1,030—generously raised by the children.

Our volunteer physiotherapists, Zenobia Thaver, Keren Gates, and Bianke Schoeman, then took the stage. Zenobia and Keren shared valuable tips on carrying backpacks and pull trolleys correctly to protect young backs, while Bianke led age-appropriate movement activities for Grades R to 5, keeping the children engaged and active.

The morning wrapped up with happy (and exhausted!) children, and an invitation from Mrs. Marais to continue SASP health awareness events at the school in the new year—ensuring more opportunities to support special needs in the community.

### Our volunteer physiotherapists shared their thoughts:

"This initiative allows children to give back to their communities in a meaningful way—not just through donations but by actively participating. It also gives us, as physiotherapists, the chance to reach young minds, promote health and wellness, and positively influence their choices for the future. Sharing our knowledge and advice at no cost is a privilege and a way to give back."



Brain Break Activities.



College Hill

## PHYSIOTHERAPY



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# EMPOWERING MOMS NAVIGATING EARLY GROSS MOTOR DEVELOPMENT

Tasneem Ebrahim

On January 9, 2025, Thrive Physiotherapy hosted a workshop for mothers of young children in the Early Learning School Years. The event provided a supportive space for moms to discuss concerns related to their children's gross motor development and gain practical strategies to address challenges.

Led by physiotherapists, the workshop focused on the importance of early motor skills and how early intervention can impact a child's growth. Topics included low postural tone, weak shoulder girdles, decreased coordination, impaired balance, and delayed milestones.

By the end of the session, moms left feeling confident and equipped to support their children's physical development, empowered with new knowledge and tools. Thrive Physiotherapy continues to play a vital role in helping parents navigate child development with education and community support.



Fun times during rehabilitation with the help of an SASP beach ball.



SASP at the ready.

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