

## NEWSLETTER, OCTOBER 2016

Obesity - a life-threatening disease with different opinions surrounding it. Some people deny its existence, some are fighting this disease since childhood and for some it is something to show off as it portrays an affluent lifestyle.

Sadly obesity and its comorbidities has become one of the biggest challenges of our time and even young children are at risk, due to various reasons, but mainly because of our sedentary lifestyles and unhealthy diets.

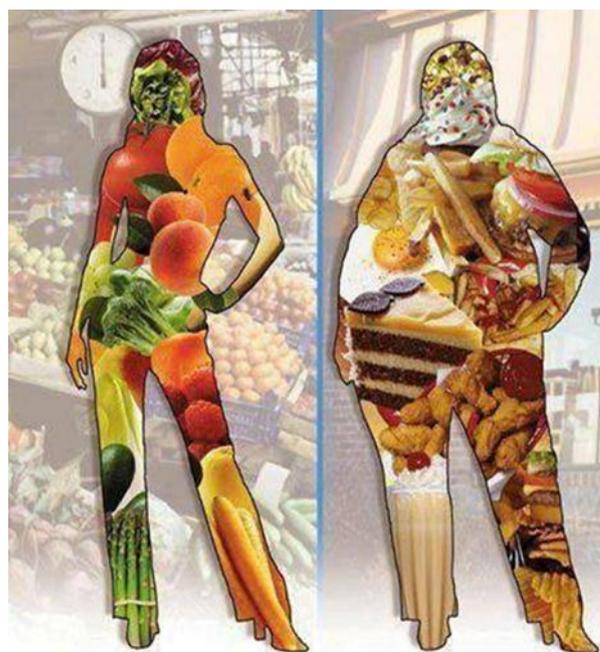
When the Minister of Health, Aaron Motsoaledi, voiced his concern on the unhealthy lifestyles of South Africans in The Financial Mail's Christmas edition in 2014, it triggered the public's attention in no uncertain ways. Suddenly health experts published books on healthy eating habits, magazines featured the pros and cons of certain diets and the Minister of Finance announced that Sugar Tax is inevitable to address the unhealthy surge of overweight adults and children in South Africa.

The global media has also taken a strong and unified action to tackle this problem. Many debates have been conducted and research has focused on the types of food and the content of what we consume under the notion of healthy food.

Bariatric surgery is not a well understood surgery in the general public environment. Though most commonly associated with obesity, it is also a very effective tool to address hypertension, elevated cholesterol levels, type 2 diabetes, as well as inflammation and endocrine system disorders such as Polycystic ovary syndrome. Our statistics is proof of obese women with no hope in falling pregnant, even having more than one child after they had bariatric surgery.

At the Centers of Excellence for Metabolic Medicine and Surgery in South Africa, we are very

successful in supporting and helping patients with non-communicable diseases (NCD's), for instance, to realize that they can claim back their lives by opting for bariatric surgery. At each of the Accredited Centers of Excellence, patients get the best possible attention by way of specialized teams consisting of specialist surgeons, endocrinologists, bariatric physicians, dieticians, psychologists and psychiatrists, with even the extended services of an Intravenous Infusion clinic, radiologists and pathologists in the same environment.



SASSO is also a member of IFSO (International Federation for the Surgery of Obesity and Metabolic Disorders) who has members in over forty different countries and is constantly requesting more surgeons with a passion for obesity surgery to join. Training is provided for surgeons and dieticians from Hospitals countrywide who resides under the umbrella of Life Healthcare, Netcare and Mediclinic. Surgeons who apply for Accreditation have to comply with extremely strict rules and regulations as people's lives are at stake, and

SASSO pride itself by being the custodian of all 11 Centers of Excellence for Metabolic Medicine and Surgery in South Africa.

History was made locally and internationally when ward hostesses at the Netcare Waterfall City Hospital had their Graduation Ceremony on the 20<sup>th</sup> of May 2016.



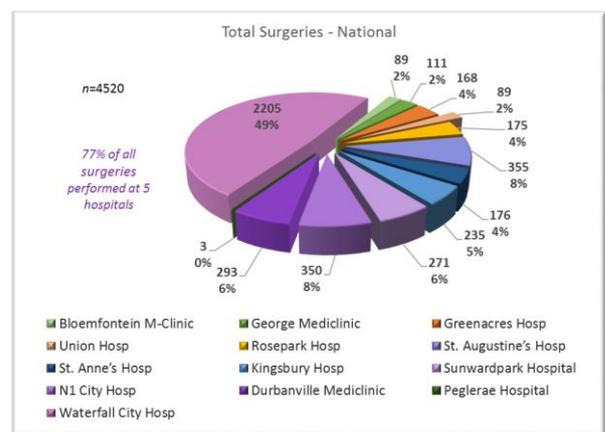
The only Internationally Accredited Bariatric Unit in South Africa is situated at the Waterfall City Hospital and it consists of a whole team of specialists in the Bariatric field. Bariatric patients require special care after surgery, especially regarding their food requirements.

We are extremely privileged to have the Medirest Group involved in the Food and Beverage Department of the Hospital at Midrand as they are known for walking the extra mile for their customers. Bariatric patients need special attention pre- and post-surgery and they are much disciplined in their service. The ward hostesses take this training quite serious as a patient can complicate or die if the correct protocol is not followed or in place. Training takes place on different levels and they receive a bronze, silver or gold medal depending on their level.

Congratulations to Prof Tess van der Merwe, CEO of CEMMS(SA) at Netcare Waterfall City Hospital, Ms Nicola Drabble and Mrs Francette Bekker, Dieticians of CEMMS(SA) who, with the support of the Hospital Manager Rolien Kuhne and Ms Adele van den Bergh, Hospital Dietician, have seen the opportunity to elevate the status of the Bariatric Unit by starting a training programme to educate the ward hostesses and for raising the

bar from mediocre to excellence at our Bariatric Unit. The graduates wear these badges with great pride as it is a first in the world!

Social media, magazine articles, research data on obesity, programmes on local and international television showcasing educational programmes on bariatric surgery, have sensitized quite a number of obese patients. The numbers in the national tallies that are coordinated through the International Accredited Centre at Midrand show how bariatric surgeries have soared again in the past year. Medical Aids such as Discovery Health and Bonitas who has recently merged with Liberty Medical Scheme (LMS) are very supportive of their members who have to undergo bariatric surgery. Some closed Medical Aids like Sasolmed, Bankmed and Parmed, have seen the benefits of supporting their employees who are suffering from non-communicable diseases because of being overweight and very sick, to becoming fit and healthy after the surgery. Some life-threatening NCD's are in many cases non-existent post-operative and their members' chronic medication have, in most cases, decreased to the minimum duly as a result of becoming healthier again.



The SASES Congress will be held from 27 – 30 October at the Champagne Sports Resort in the Drakensberg. International faculty who will share their expertise are Dr Ian Beckingham from the United Kingdom, Dr Tim Bright from Australia, Dr Sven Bringman from Sweden, Prof Nicolas Demartines from Switzerland, Mr James

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Horwood from Wales, Prof Tim Rockall, also from the United Kingdom, Dr Francis Seow-Choen from Singapore, Dr Pieter Tanis from the Netherlands and Prof Dr Andre D'Hoore from Belgium.

Many international experts have registered as delegates during this Congress.

Prof Tess van der Merwe and her team of experts, are still highly in command where the general public needs to be informed on the pros and cons of obesity surgery. The national radio station RSG has invited her for a live interview at the Westcliff Hotel in Gauteng on the 12<sup>th</sup> of October 2016 as part of the Women's Month celebrations. Netcare is hosting a Medical Symposium at the Pivot in Monte Casino on the 5th of November 2016 and Prof Tess van der Merwe will deliver a talk on ***Obesity: An ethical approach to a massive epidemic.*** She was also interviewed earlier this year by Tim Modise on the Tonight Show on SABC2.

These mediums provide an excellent educational platform that reaches the public in the most remote places and unusual areas. It also makes our Team aware of the vast misperceptions amongst the population regarding obesity, the subsequent NCD's and bariatric surgery as a tool to longevity.

We are privileged to have the support and sponsorship from the most prominent medical companies such as Netcare, Mediclinic and Life Healthcare who have Bariatric Centers of Excellence for Metabolic Medicine and Surgery of SA in their hospitals. These Bariatric Teams have been granted full accreditation by the International Centre of Excellence situated in the Netcare Waterfall City Hospital in Midrand, Gauteng.

Success stories and testimonials from some of our patients give our team such pride and contentment to be part of an exceptional group.

Here we share some of them:

- We got a photo from one of our female patients at the top of Mt Kilimanjaro! She has also run a marathon and has walked the Camino de Santiago in Spain (Age:

50, weight before surgery in 2014: 138.8 and BMI before surgery 43.4)

- One of our male patients also did the Camino de Santiago in Spain (Age: 51, weight before surgery in 2014: 121 and BMI before surgery: 38.4)
- A male patient cycled from Johannesburg to Pietermaritzburgh and then he participated in the Amashova (PMB-Durban). The first time he ever saw us he needed to stop for breath 3 times! (Age: 36, weight before surgery in 2012: 152.7, BMI before surgery: 49.3)
- Nicola Drabble also saw another female patient at the Magalies Monster MTB race- it is one of the toughest in Johannesburg and she is doing the Berg- and Bush- 3 day stage race in October. (Age: 36, weight before surgery in December 2014: 142.8)
- One of our male patients did a 4 day stage race for Charity in September 2016 (Age: 47, weight before surgery in September 2015: 177.9 and BMI before surgery: 56.1)
- A female patient decided to do bungee jumping and sky diving with her boys - weight limit of 100kg! She would never have qualified before the surgery! (Age: 38, weight before surgery in October 2013: 160.8 and BMI before surgery: 53.7)
- One of our female patients has become a professional body builder (Age: 35, weight before surgery in Sept 2011: 123.6 and BMI before surgery: 43.8)
- We are having several families who are doing very well, individually and as a team.
- One of our male patients has been seen participating in many trial runs around Johannesburg.
- There have been many successful pregnancies after surgery and diabetic patients are off insulin completely.

Following is the Internationally Accredited CEMMS(SA) team situated in the Netcare Waterfall City Hospital in Midrand, Gauteng.

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Absent from the photo were Mrs Karen Darné (Medical Aid Accounts) and Dr Zubeida Mahomedy (Psychiatrist, who works on a consultancy basis at the Centre).



**From left to right:** Dr Gerhard Botha (Family Physician and General Practitioner), Ms Julia Mogaswa (Snr Office Assistant), Ms Nicola Drabble (Dietician), David Goncalves (Psychologist), Ms René Hagen (Personal Assistant and Medical Accountant), Ms Driekie van der Merwe (Secretarial Assistance Sessional rooms), Mrs Francette Bekker (Dietician), Mr Cecil Keys (Executive Secretary and Receptionist), Mrs Annelie van der Lingen (Practice Manager), Mrs Irene Goncalves (Physiotherapist), Ms Rachael Darné (Motivations and Database), Sister Karen Gibson (Infusion Clinic and Medical Aid

Motivations), Ms Isobel Vosloo (Executive Secretary), Ms Tendayi Marambakuyana (Office Assistant), Prof Tess van der Merwe (CEO : SASSO), Dr Gary Fetter (Specialist Surgeon), Mrs Geraldine Letnik (Executive Secretary).

We are now moving into the last trimester of the year and know that we are, more than ever before, facing enormous challenges in saving peoples' lives, to help in educating the general public as far and wide on every platform available, and to get as many Medical Aid funds on board to support our cause to help and change the lives of their obese members.

Kind regards

*Isobel Vosloo*

**Executive Assistant  
Secretarial Services: Practice  
Secretariat: Board of CEMMS(SA) and SASSO**