

# Muzimkhulu Zungu

*MBChB (UCT), Master of Medicine (MMed) in Community Health (UP); Diploma in Occupational Medicine and Health (DOMH) (UP), Fellow of the College of Public Health Medicine of South Africa (FCPHM)*

In December 2020, Prof. Muzimkhulu Zungu was promoted to adjunct professor in the School of Health Systems and Public Health (SHSPH), Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Pretoria. Muzimkhulu 'Muzi' Zungu was first introduced to the field of occupational health during a field visit to a sweet factory while he was an under-graduate medical student at the University of Cape Town (UCT) in 2002. While the highlight of the visit was the gift pack at the end of the day, he did register that, within health work, there is a field that specialises in 'safety' in the workplace. Of course, 'safety' is not really what Muzi works with in occupational health, but colleagues in occupational health will have become familiar with the forgivable mistake by many employers in thinking that 'safety' is equivalent to occupational health.

It was, however, not until 2006, when he joined the University of Pretoria community health (now public health medicine) registrar programme, that the real fire and passion for occupational health or, rather, workers' health, was ignited in his professional life. He was 'hooked' when he rotated through the National Institute for Occupational Health (NIOH). Muzi remembers this as being the beginning of his occupational health career and one of two of his favourite rotations of the entire four-year registrar programme. It is not surprising that 12 months later, in 2010, he joined the NIOH on a full-time basis, accepting a position as a medical officer. This confused his family and friends who were still trying to understand what a community health or public health medicine specialist was, and now he was going to work in an occupational health institute, which was also less known in mainstream medicine.

Muzi is currently the head of the HIV/TB in the Workplace unit at the NIOH, National Health Laboratory Service (NHLS). He is the founding head of this unit, which aims to strengthen occupational health services, with an emphasis on HIV and TB in the work environment. Muzi also has a joint appointment in the Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences Division of the SHSPH at the University of Pretoria, as a senior lecturer and coordinator of the Diploma in Occupational Medicine and Health (DOMH) programme. His responsibilities are: 1) to conduct research and supervise post-graduate students' research (diploma, master's and PhD) in environmental and occupational health, 2) to facilitate teaching and training of under- and post-graduate students at the SHSPH and, to a limited extent, other institutions of higher learning, 3) to train workers in various workplaces, and 4) to provide service delivery in occupational health (his favourite part of the job as he gets to be at the coal face with workers confronting health and safety hazards, head-on with employers, organised labour, and the relevant regulator).

Muzi has extensive experience in working with tripartite-plus social partners in the workplace, such as government departments (Employment and Labour, Health, and Mineral Resources and Energy), organised labour, organised business, the Informal economy, and



**Professor Muzimkhulu Zungu**

*Photograph: courtesy of NIOH*

civil society stakeholders. His previous experience includes being a clinical manager in the Gauteng Department of Health, director of the Medical Bureau for Occupational Diseases (MBOD), assistant compensation commissioner for occupational diseases (CCOD), and acting executive director of the NIOH.

Working in these different but related positions has allowed him to collaborate and/or serve within various occupational health technical partnerships and committees within the Republic of South Africa, the Southern African Development Community (SADC), African Union Development Agency–New Partnership for Africa's Development (AUDA-NEPAD), International Labour Organization (ILO); World Health Organization (WHO); International Commission on Occupational Health (ICOH); the World Bank; and other local and international institutions of higher learning. Through these collaborations, he has graduated several post-graduate students, published in peer-reviewed journals, and produced a number of technical reports and advisories.

Muzi's favourite quote is: "It always seems impossible until it is done" (Nelson Mandela).