

Celebrating Martha Buthelezi's contribution to the MUT Clinic

It was in 1994 when Martha Buthelezi joined MUT as a Student Health Officer to focus specifically on delivering health services to students. Martha was already a seasoned healthcare professional with over 20 years' experience. She had worked as a nurse for 10 years at Madadeni Hospital, three years at the Don McKenzie Hospital, over three years at the Tongaat Community Clinic, three years in industry, and a year in Nkandla Hospital as an educator.

"I was recruited strictly for student health services but I knew in my mind that you cannot deny other people these health services," she said. The MUT clinic in those days, explained Martha, was located in Block C and operated more like a first aid room.

"I thought it was a big elephant; one bite at a time. When I came, I had my own vision of what I wanted to do. I started running the clinic before it was registered because I had a background in running clinics. My experience in Tongaat gave me that," she said.

Martha started the process of getting the MUT Clinic registered as a comprehensive health service provider. She recruited a general assistant and enlisted the services of Dr Zodwa Ngobese, as the clinic was required to have a visiting doctor as part of its staff.

Martha explained that the Clinic was important in dealing with health issues as a result of where it was located. The Clinic attended to many student medical emergencies, so much so that it acquired an ambulance for transporting students to the nearby Prince Mshiyeni Hospital. It also served the family planning needs of students, along with attending to Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI) and Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD).



Sister Martha Buthelezi

In these early days of the MUT Clinic, HIV and AIDS was also becoming a significant problem in higher education. MUT rolled out the Higher Education AIDS Programme to help fight the AIDS epidemic and help students graduate alive. "In 1994 the death of students was related to politics," said Martha. "In 1997 the trend had changed; deaths were caused by 'natural causes' because they would not reveal what caused the deaths."

Everything changed in 2000 when the West Wing administration building, where the MUT Clinic is currently located, was constructed. As part of the University's efforts to deliver quality healthcare to students, the MUT Clinic was designed to look like other clinics.

Martha worked at the MUT Clinic for 20 years before she retired. She continues to consult on occupational health.