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## Building SA's pharmacy expertise for the future

**Netcare pharmacy internships and learnerships have benefitted just on 400 graduates and YES candidates to date**

Over the past five years, Netcare has enrolled a total of 397 pharmacist interns as well as pharmacist assistant and pharmacy stock control learners within Netcare hospital pharmacies across the country. This is contributing to laying a strong foundation for strengthening the South African pharmacy teams of the future.

### **Pharmacist internships**

"The internships offer valuable opportunities for both students who have completed their Bachelor of Pharmacy (B Pharm) qualification and to pharmacist assistants to learn and grow, and to equip themselves with the training, work based practical experience and skills they will require in their specific roles either within hospital pharmacies, retail or in other pharmacy settings," says Vishala Gokool-Sewram, general manager of pharmacy at Netcare.

"Netcare has increased its yearly pharmacist internship capacity five fold to respond to the huge influx of student pharmacist applications for internships, increasing from 28 in 2017 to 102 in 2021, which equates to about 10% of pharmacist interns nationally.

"Upon completing their B Pharm qualification, graduates are required to complete a one-year pharmacist internship under the guidance of a registered tutor who is also an experienced pharmacist. This training helps graduates transition from academic theory to application in a real workplace setting to help improve the health of patients," says Gokool-Sewram.

September is Pharmacy Month, and this year the theme is 'Think pharmacy: Quality healthcare for all'. This is well supported by the span of the pharmacist intern programmes which include practical training in hospital pharmacy, clinical pharmacy and retail pharmacy.

The pharmacist interns receive a solid grounding with exposure to the Netcare clinical pharmacy programme which encompasses amongst others antimicrobial stewardship, medication safety and clinical pharmacy rounds to deliver specialised medicine services, ensuring quality healthcare for patients.

"These pillars promote the appropriate use of antibiotics, antifungals and antivirals as a mitigating principle to reduce the global challenge of antimicrobial resistance, and ensure the right medication at the right time and at the right dose to prevent medicine-



related harm. Clinical pharmacy rounds build experience in individualised dosing for the unique clinical needs of each patient,” Gokool-Sewram explains.

“During the practical training period, a pharmacist intern is required to successfully complete the pre-registration evaluation which comprises the online submission of a continuing professional development (CPD) portfolio and writing the pre-registration examination. In addition, the tutor must submit the required progress reports prior to registration as a pharmacist for the purpose of performing pharmacy community service. After completion of the community service year, they can practise as professional pharmacists.

“A pharmacist’s contribution to the healthcare team and patient care through responsible medicine is critical. Training at a Netcare facility empowers future pharmacists with the relevant and appropriate experience to enable professional and career growth, in either the private or public sector,” Gokool notes.

#### **YES intern and learnership training programmes in pharmacy**

“In addition to the pharmacist interns, Netcare has provided vocational training to young South Africans who are enrolled on the Youth Employment Services (YES) initiative, including 95 pharmacist assistant and 28 stock control learners from Technical, Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges,” adds Sanjay Khoosal, Netcare’s head of people development and employment equity.

“The types of training we have prioritised in these programmes directly relate to the skills that are needed but in short supply within the South African healthcare sector. Many of these formal qualifications take at least three years to complete. Once qualified, most candidates achieve registration or accreditation with the relevant councils or professional bodies.

“Developing young people with scarce skills in sought-after fields, such as pharmacy, enables them to participate meaningfully in the economy while equipping the next generation of pharmacy teams with valuable institutional pharmacy experience,” Khoosal adds.

Netcare is one of five corporate anchor partners of the government’s YES initiative, which President Cyril Ramaphosa launched in 2018 to help address South African youth unemployment and promote inclusive economic growth through skills development and work experience.

Netcare committed to offer formal structured vocational training programmes that are linked to career opportunities for 1 000 young people over a five year period. Netcare has already exceeded this commitment, with a total of 1 167 unemployed youths having been enrolled on various vocational programmes across Netcare operations. A total of 401 who have already completed their programmes have been gainfully employed.

Interested B.Pharm students who will be completing their studies in 2021 can apply to enrol for a pharmacist internship via [internpharmacist@netcare.co.za](mailto:internpharmacist@netcare.co.za) and other graduates can contact [yes@netcare.co.za](mailto:yes@netcare.co.za) to enquire about pharmacist assistant internships or pharmacy stores learnerships.



"We celebrate the achievements of all our Netcare pharmacy teams, including interns and learners, this Pharmacy Month, and notably on World Pharmacist Day, 25 September, the role and contribution of Netcare and other pharmacists in the country to quality healthcare delivery," Gokool-Sewram concludes.

*Ends*

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