

# TAKING CARE OF COMMUNITY CARERS

Community health workers need to be given the care and support they deserve.

Community health workers are often the front line of the healthcare system. In KwaZulu-Natal, these teams are mostly made up of women drawn from the local community and play a significant role in bridging the gap between communities and government departments and sectors.

They require various types of support to equip them to play their role. Community health workers are faced with difficult situations in households daily. For example, they often face challenges with chronic patients where they need to explain frequently changing health guidelines and policies, without these changes having been properly communicated to them themselves. The job requirements often drain them emotionally.

A researcher at the University of KwaZulu-Natal has studied the needs and effectiveness of ward-based outreach teams. She found that the need for ongoing training is critical.

“This includes training on chronic conditions such as high blood pressure, diabetes, TB and HIV. They also require further training on CPR, wound dressing and first aid management of snake bites,”



Community healthcare workers should be provided with the necessary support to care for their communities.

says Dr Euphemia Mbali Mhlongo. Training should also include monthly updates on new developments and changes, as well as refresher training on common diseases. These community health workers have also expressed a need for coping skills to deal with their own emotions, stress and depression.

“Community health workers are trained in counselling, maternal and child health, sexual and reproductive health and infectious diseases. However, there is a massive need for caring and debriefing programmes for the carers themselves.”

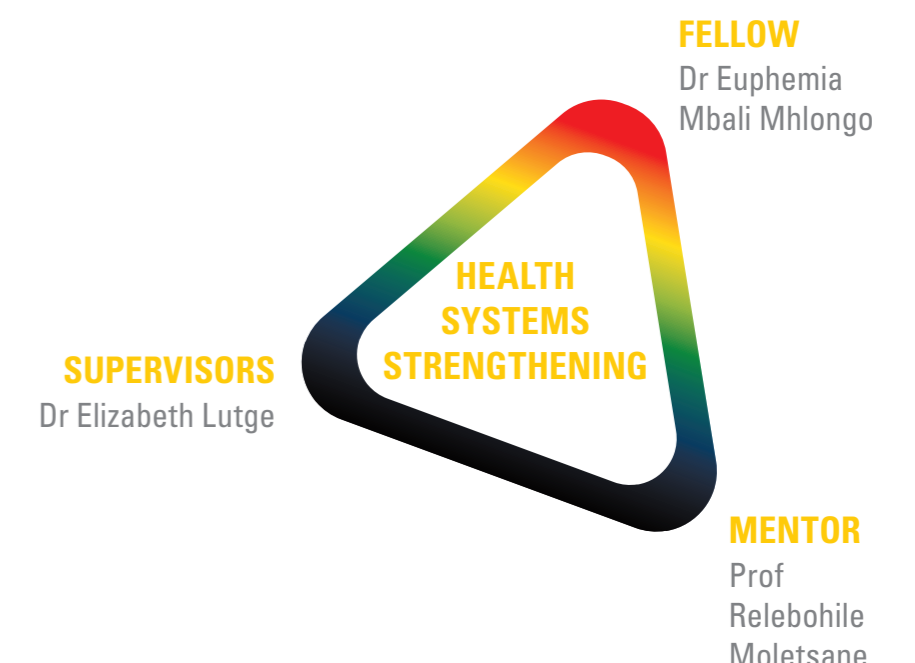


## Towards Research Leadership

Dr Euphemia Mbali Mhlongo is a lecturer specialising in community health nursing at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

 @Mhlongo\_EM

Developing Research Innovation, Localisation and Leadership (DRILL) is a health sciences training programme producing research excellence in South Africa. DRILL creates a triad of support for emerging researchers.



Mhlongo EM & Lutge E. (2019). “The roles, responsibilities and perceptions of community health workers and ward-based primary health care outreach teams (WBPHCOTs) in South Africa: A scoping review protocol.” Syst Rev 8, 193; <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13643-019-1114-5>



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