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DR ANDILE ZWANE, MEDICAL SERVICES MANAGER – SAVING AND SUSTAINING OUR THRIVING AFRICAN COMMUNITY

...Leading from the front with professional medical care...

8 March 2021: If there is one thing that all of us can take away from the last year, it is that combatting this global pandemic is in all our hands, we are all accountable, and even more importantly, we are stronger when we work together! It has also given us a new appreciation for our medical colleagues, those frontline heroes who have selflessly stepped up to protect, educate and care for us – often at great risk to themselves. That is why this International Women's Day, we want to recognise an Illovo champion who has led her team with courage and conviction as the Eswatini medical unit worked tirelessly to combat Covid-19 in the Ubombo community.

Dr Zwane has worked in the medical department at Ubombo Sugar Limited's hospital for several years. She started working as a medical officer in October 2015, where she accepted the opportunity to be a middle manager. With the need to equip herself with the necessary skills and knowledge to give her patients and business her utmost best, she decided, with the assistance of Illovo, to do a post-graduate diploma in Occupational Health at the University of Stellenbosch in 2018. Challenging as her journey was – she had to juggle between being the only resident doctor at the time and her university course load - Dr Zwane had no idea that her chosen path would shape and prepare her for her current career trajectory. Her dedication and commitment to excellence saw her appointed to the position of Medical Services Manager in April 2020.

We spoke to Dr Zwane as part of our series of "people stories" because like many others across the Illovo Group, we believe she is a company role model who deserves to be celebrated on International Women's Day. We loved hearing about her career path, how she overcame her challenges, and worked towards her achievements - especially how she has supported the community during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“ Meet our very own incredible employee and learn more about her journey to save and sustain lives during the Covid-19 pandemic. ”

#InternationalWomensDay
#ThrivingAfricanCommunity

Dr Andile Zwane, Medical Services Manager at Ubombo Hospital in Eswatini

Describe a typical day in your position and what has been your biggest highlight/ achievement so far?

A typical day would normally start with ward rounds for patients that are admitted, attending to that includes walk-ins and emergencies. There is also a lot of administrative work that comes with my job from meetings to providing medical expert opinions on matters relating to employee wellness, health and fitness for duty. Of course, my role encompasses ensuring relevant occupational health legislation and regulatory standards are adhered to as well.



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My biggest achievement so far has been the ability to lead from the front with this pandemic. The situation was new for all of us, we had to learn quickly, draw up guidelines and policies and then train ourselves and others on the estate on how to adhere to them, while also providing high level advice to the business leadership. The successful rollout of those learnings has meant that we were able to record excellent recovery rates for those who contracted the virus, and despite a high number of cases in the Group, our production continued uninterrupted.

How has the outbreak of COVID-19 affected your day-to-day work and the operations of the hospital?

COVID-19 affected day-to-day operations even before we recorded our first case and lockdowns were implemented. We had to conduct various training courses for healthcare workers, company employees at all levels, schools' learners, contractors and private businesses around us. We had to procure medical personal protection equipment that was already scarce and expensive due to high demand, and that would last employees for minimum 6 months. We had to temporarily suspend services that were non-emergencies and suspend doctor's, dental and physio appointments. We had to stop aerosol producing procedures normally done to check lung function tests during pre-employment, periodic and exit medicals. We also had to restrict visitors of admitted patients and only allow patients to be accompanied by one person if they needed physical aid. Minor ailment consultations were allowed via hospital emergency phone instead of having people come in to reduce risk of exposure. Refills for chronic medication were done via email and medication collected directly from the pharmacy.

What are the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on your team and how are you dealing with those?

I am surrounded by a team of hard-working, flexible individuals who are committed to patient care. Even though aspects of dealing with the pandemic have been daunting, the team continues to rise above all challenges. It has not been an easy road; there is anxiety & fatigue – something that we all have. We have had sessions of reassuring and encouraging each other and have shared the gifts of appreciation we receive as a team. In the pipeline is to have a session with psychologists, and private sessions for those who need them, for the hospital staff who have been such an important part of how we have worked through these unprecedented times. I think also having the understanding that we have so many people that rely on us for medical assistance keeps us going. This pandemic has forced us to constantly revise our ways of working and to keep up with new medical information as it arises.

There is the projection of a third wave of COVID-19. What is most worrying to you?

The most worrying thing is the fact that it has been said the third wave will come in a severe form, with a higher mortality rate due to the nature of the SARS COVID 19 virus mutations. Fatigue and anxiety on the part of health care workers, the unwillingness of the public to continue to adhere to medical guidelines; despair from general public as they see loved ones dying; the increase in mental health issues (resulting from job losses), not being able to mourn and bury loved ones in the way we are accustomed to and balancing our personal work-personal demands – all of these pressures and others, add fuel to the fire. However, what gives me hope is the diligent work by scientists to develop vaccines, the government mandated rollout strategies, the good recovery rate at Ubombo, positive feedback from patients and the continuous support and health protocols implemented from various leaders of the organisation.



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As a medical expert, what advice would you give to fellow employees and the ordinary citizen about protecting oneself from infection and adhering to national guidelines?

Hand hygiene, wearing of masks and social distancing are non-negotiables. Avoiding unnecessary travel is another one to consider seriously. I would also encourage every citizen to accept vaccination once it is made available to them, and to be aware of the importance of early detection of potential symptoms so you don't unintentionally infect others, as well as ensuring appropriate health behaviours at home if a family member tests positive. Right now, "we love and protect each other by staying away". This pandemic has given us opportunities to gain new skills and spend time on our hobbies, learning things we didn't even know we would be good at! It has also provided us with a chance to reconnect with the people in our households. We have to believe that we will have a level of normalcy in the near future; but for now, we have to keep and maintain physical distancing, take advantage of virtual connections and keep each other safe.

We salute you Dr Zwane, and all of our women employees across Illovo Sugar Africa!

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About Illovo Sugar Africa

Illovo Sugar Africa (Pty) Ltd is a Pan-African consumer centric agri-business with roots in growing and making sugar and related products. It is Africa's largest sugar producer and has extensive agricultural operations in six southern African countries – eSwatini, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania and Zambia - manufacturing sugar and downstream products from cane supplied by its own agricultural operations and independent growers. The group is a wholly owned subsidiary of Associated British Foods plc (ABF), a diversified international food, ingredients and retail group operating in more than 50 countries. Illovo Sugar Africa employs more than 12 000 people in permanent positions across the group with a further 18 000 people employed on a temporary basis. In a recent independent socio-economic study, the company is estimated to support at least 71 443 jobs across the group and for each of Illovo's 29 663 direct employees, at least 1.4 additional jobs are estimated to be supported through grower communities and wider multiplier effects throughout the economy. Illovo has a proud history of significant contribution to local economies in which it operates and its positive social impact across this region on rural communities is substantial. Illovo's total economic impact, including direct, indirect and induced impacts, was estimated at R 23.8 billion in 2016/1