

Dr Sulé Burger

Sulé completed her schooling in Johannesburg and matriculated in 2006. She held multiple leadership, sporting, cultural and outreach roles at school, but is most proud of the work she did as deputy mayor of Johannesburg on the Junior City Council. She speaks fondly of being a teenager who from an early age was challenged to appreciate every person's unique nature through this organisation. The JCC instilled in her the value of giving back, and how even small actions can make a significant impact. Together with her co-councillors they launched their passion project, Grow2Lead just after matriculating. This small business delivered experiential leadership programs to school students which were relevant to the South African context.

She graduated with her MBChB from WITS university in 2014. During her university years she founded local surgical societies and ultimately the International Association of Student Surgical Societies. The societies aimed to provide extracurricular surgical skills training as well as build leadership and community amongst future surgeons. In her capacity as Secretary General of the IASSS, she formally aligned the ISS-SIC (International Society of Surgery) as the official student and trainee wing, facilitated the inaugural group of Future Surgeons at the Basel World Congress in 2017, in 2019 the Krakow conference was the first to include trainees as attendees and Sule worked towards launching a trainee congress track and the second delegation of 24 Future Surgeons which focused on supporting all geographic regions to gain equitable representation and access to opportunities.

As a junior doctor she was mesmerised by the complexity of health care and all the aspects required to deliver safe health care. She became acutely aware that surgical disease caused more morbidity and mortality than all the infectious diseases combined as published in the Lancet in 2014. Her early research focused around global surgery; the emerging field of providing equitable access to safe, affordable surgical care to all. Her special areas of interest were operating theatre complex efficiency and service delivery. In 2016 she was invited by the Department of Health to participate in a leadership development program for hospital CEO's and completed her postgraduate certificate in Health Care Leadership through Lancaster University.

Being initially uninspired by the lifestyle of surgeons, she moved into corporate medicine for 2 years. Sulé launched the Young Doctor Program at Discovery Health in 2018, a special project aimed at acknowledging the challenges young doctors face in the South African public health care sector and supporting their development to become emotionally mature, safe practitioners who are connected, having important conversations and supporting each other to work towards building a health care structure they are proud to work in. She hosted a leadership summit for 45 prominent young doctors at the discovery headquarters 4 months into her tenure and continued working with partners to roll out resources for young doctors in each sphere of their young professional development. She is most proud of changing the conversations around mental health in the workplace. A year later she moved to Essential Medical Guidance, a health technology start up and assisted them in their "scale up" as clinical liaison and commercial developer. She speaks fondly of learning how integral a small, effective, flexible team is to a small business. She gained insight into the intersection between commercial health care and technology. Wanting to remain clinically sound during these two years, Sule locumed in private accident and emergency casualties and did aeromedical work in the evenings.

Ultimately her love for the surgical discipline called her back to full time clinical work. She worked as a trauma resuscitation officer in one of the country's busiest trauma units in Cape Town before moving to Kwazulu Natal to follow her dream of becoming a surgeon. She is currently a medical officer at Ngwelezana Hospital spending her days learning the ins and outs of surgery. She hopes to get a training post for general surgery in Cape Town in the near future.

