

Alberta Doctors' Digest

Shine A Light: Dr. Bulelwa Mpisi

When Dr. Bulelwa Mpisi graduated from medical school in South Africa in 2008, she imagined a future in surgery. But before committing to training, she decided to travel for a couple of years, practicing family medicine. She thought the experience would broaden her perspective before returning home for a surgical residency.

Her stay in Canada was meant to be temporary.

"I figured I'd travel, gain some experience and then go back home," she says. "Canada popped up as an option, and so off I went."

Her early years here weren't easy. After arriving in 2012, Dr. Mpisi practised in a small community in Saskatchewan and found herself deeply homesick, with plans to return to South Africa still firmly in place.

"I was always planning to go back home," she recalls. "But a friend said, 'At least try Alberta before you go back, so you have some good stories to tell about Canada.'"

She followed her friend's advice, coming to Alberta to gain more experience before returning to South Africa for surgical training. Instead, she was won over. She chose to stay, making family medicine — and Alberta — her long-term home.



Dr. Bulelwa Mpisi

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Energized by the variety and continuity of family medicine

Now based in Calgary, Dr. Mpisi works as a family physician at a clinic in the city's northwest and also provides emergency department coverage in Drumheller on some weekends. She first practiced in Drumheller when she moved to Alberta in 2015 but later relocated to Calgary to better support her children's educational needs.

Family medicine aligned closely with what matters most to her as a physician.

"For me, it's the relationships," she explains. "You get to care for people through their whole lives. I've met patients when they were babies, seen them grow up, get married and now I'm caring for their children. I've cared for grandparents, great-grandparents and now their grandchildren."

That continuity, combined with the variety family medicine offers, is what keeps her energized.

"You get to do a little bit of everything," she says. "There are different challenges every day. I'm never bored."

A moment of recognition that reignited purpose

Being recognized through the AMA's Shine A Light program was especially meaningful for Dr. Mpisi.

"Getting that email honestly cheered me up so much," she says. "Like anyone, there are moments where you ask yourself, 'Am I still good enough? Am I stuck? Am I making a difference?' And then a patient takes the time to say you did, and you think, 'Okay, yeah. I can still do this.'"

As an immigrant physician, those doubts can sometimes feel heavier. For Dr. Mpisi, practising in a new country sometimes meant carrying not only the usual professional doubts, but also quiet questions about belonging.

"You start to second-guess yourself," she explains. "You wonder if you belong here. You wonder if it's because you're an immigrant. But then something like this reminds you: it has nothing to do with where you're from or what you look like. It's about the care you give and the service you provide."

That reminder, she says, reignites her sense of purpose.

"I love this. I love what I do. I love putting smiles on people's faces and seeing them get better. I love watching these babies that I held when they were small grow into adults ... It's just beautiful."

About the Shine A Light Program

Recognizing physicians through the voices of patients and communities

The Alberta Medical Association's Shine A Light program allows patients and community members to recognize AMA member physicians for:

- providing exemplary care that made a difference in a patient's life
- leading initiatives that improve patient and/or community well being
- contributing to a high-performing health care system

Do you know a physician who goes above and beyond for their patients or community? You can [nominate them](#) through the Shine A Light program on the AMA website.

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