

# The future of nursing is bright

By [Champion Nyoni](#)

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A lot has happened in 2020 and more will happen in the future. The Covid-19 pandemic brought various challenges to the healthcare system and nurses have been at the coalface of these challenges. The mental health of nurses has been challenged, their resilience tested, and their teamwork strengthened.



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In the future, a collective approach related to the function and role of nurses needs to be enhanced; the growth of the nursing profession is essential, and nurses will continue this work through enhancing their professional identity, their professional role, their own research, and also through teamwork with other professionals.

The future of nursing is bright. The past 60 years have shown rapid advancements in the professionalisation of nursing – from being an altruistic occupation to a profession with legal status in many countries. The science of nursing has been growing exponentially, with several nursing-specific research and research led by nursing scientists. The impact of nursing research continues to be aligned with improved healthcare and health outcomes in many settings across the globe.

Nurses continue to be celebrated for their tireless efforts in influencing healthcare and health outcomes. The world requires more professional nurses, not only by qualification but by necessary and appropriate context-specific competencies aimed at universal healthcare.

Nurses have to look towards negotiating new healthcare spaces where their professional roles, though indispensable, are aligned with future population healthcare needs. In the same vein, the nurse of the future needs to embrace the Fourth Industrial Revolution and its potential influence on the profession.

## Training

At the UFS School of Nursing we prepare competent professional nurses who meet the healthcare needs of our population and the future. Our undergraduate programme is aligned with the primary healthcare approach, which is a complex healthcare model that underpins the health delivery system in South Africa and many low- and middle-income countries.

The postgraduate nursing programmes at the UFS are driven towards producing independent thinkers who are able to significantly contribute to the development of nursing and healthcare, not only in South Africa but also in the rest of Africa.

The students, drawn from all over the continent are challenged to engage in research that makes a contribution to their own nursing practice and context.

## Research

Two established research niche areas drive the research agenda in the School of Nursing, namely the transfer of learning and health communications research niche areas. In the transfer of learning through the research niches, various research projects are in place – all aimed at improving the quality of nursing education, which in turn result in quality graduates who will influence health outcomes.

Currently, various projects such as emotional intelligence in nursing, online education of clinical preceptors, professional identity in nursing, 'self-directedness among nursing students, and extended reality in nursing education are some of the ongoing research projects aimed at improving the nursing education agenda and improving student experiences of nursing education.

In the health communication research niche, several projects have been initiated in South Africa, Lesotho, and Kenya, and have been reported in several national and international fora. Both of these research niche areas are engaged in national, Africa-wide, and global research collaborations.

A new research centre in the School of Nursing is about to be launched, focusing on reproductive, maternal, neonatal, and child health (RMHC).

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr Champion Nyoni is a senior researcher and lecturer in the School of Nursing at the University of the Free State (UFS). He is the first UFS staff member and only the third African to win the prestigious Sigma Emerging Nurse Researcher/Scholar award.

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