

Mphako Charles Martin Modiba

1 November 1952 - 28 October 2010

A servant of the people, true hero, teacher and family man, Professor Mphako Charles Modiba, the eldest son of Matome Titus and the late Salome Maletlabo Modiba, was born on 1 November 1952 at Pietersburg Hospital and matriculated from Hwiti High School in 1971. He followed his calling in surgery with dedication, empathy, and a drive to impart his knowledge to those who were privileged to be his audience.

Charles Modiba graduated M.B. Ch.B. in 1976 at the University of Natal, topping the graduation list and receiving the most prizes at the Hippocratic Oath Ceremony for best final-year student in obstetrics, gynaecology and surgery as well as for the student who showed the greatest promise in the final exam. He did his internship at Baragwanath Hospital in 1977.

He returned to Johannesburg in 1979 as a medical officer, after spending a year studying at Natal University, and joined the Wits registrar circuit at Baragwanath Hospital from 1980 until 1983. He was admitted as a Fellow of the College of Surgeons in 1982 and received the Michael and Janie Miller Prize in Surgery in the same year for his outstanding performance in the College examinations. He obtained his M.Med. in Surgery at Wits with a dissertation on 'The effect of anterior highly selective vagotomy and posterior selective vagotomy on gastric emptying and mucosal histology', his supervisor for this thesis being Buddy Lawson.

Charles Modiba registered as a general surgeon in 1984 and was appointed as a specialist at Baragwanath Hospital. He became actively involved in research and wrote and co-authored a number of papers.

He was awarded the Michael and Janie Miller Travelling Fellowship in 1985 on the basis of his promise in academic surgery

and visited Les Blumgart's liver unit at Hammersmith Hospital in London for six months. Shortly after his return to Johannesburg he was promoted to senior surgeon at Bara.

In late 1989 he was awarded the North-Western University Faculty Fellowship, and worked in Dr J. S. Wolf's transplantation research unit in Chicago to further his studies in kidney transplantation.

During this period he also did the bulk of the work for his Ph.D., which he was awarded when he moved to Medunsa. His supervisor was Bert Myburgh, and the thesis was entitled 'The effect of distal splenorenal shunting on hepatic perfusion and function of patients with bleeding oesophageal varices in schistosomiasis'. In 1990 he was one of two black surgeons at Baragwanath Hospital who could perform full transplants and the only black specialist in kidney and liver surgery.

As Professor and Head of the Department of Surgery at the University of Limpopo, Medunsa Campus, for 18 years, Charles Modiba was a dedicated clinician and teacher. He was well respected and widely acknowledged for his sense of responsibility in training and encouraging young black

doctors to pursue further studies and specialise. During his career he trained 31 black surgeons.

To his family he was a devoted and loving husband, a responsible and caring father and a playful and enthusiastic grandfather, who will be sorely missed

He is survived by his wife Lebitsi Maud Modiba, as well as four sisters, two brothers, his two children and two grandchildren.

Robala ka khutso Kgomo!

Mamoroke Lehobye (*cousin of Charles Modiba*)

