



SOUTH AFRICAN ACADEMY OF  
FAMILY PHYSICIANS

**25th National Congress**  
**Integrating Primary Care – creating a more connected  
health and care system.**

# Welcome to the



SOUTH AFRICAN ACADEMY OF

# **FAMILY PHYSICIANS**

# **25<sup>th</sup> Annual Practitioners Conference**

# Exploring the influence of professional socialization on the professional identity development of Clinical Associates using critical theory.



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## Introduction

In efforts to increase human resources, the mid-level health care worker category has been introduced globally with various analogue names as physician assistant, clinical offer, medical licentiate, clinical associate and more South Africa introduced the clinical associate profession in 2002 as a group of mid-level health care workers. Identity is a social construct influenced by various factors. Limited literature on the socialization influences of the clinA profession.



## Research Question

How does professional socialization influence Clinical Associates' professional identity construction in South Africa?

## Background

**2008** – The first class of students start the programme at Walter Sisulu University.  
**2009**- The first class of students at the University of Witwatersrand and University of Pretoria start.  
**2016**- The minister of health sign the scope of practice.  
**2020**- HPCSA report record 1500 clinical associates whom are registered with HPCSA at the time.  
**2022**-The University of Witwatersrand celebrate 10 years of the profession with a 1 week celebration.

Clinical associates are trained to be mid level health care workers to provide health care services with the health professions team. They are taught to primarily function in the district hospitals to manage common conditions in South Africa.

The integration and the socialization processes and outcomes of the new group of health care professionals into the team has not been effectively monitored. Socialization is identified in literature as a process which can yield both positive outcomes and negatives outcomes.

## Paradigm

Critical theory will be used as a lens to analyse the findings. It is a paradigm which best assesses lived experiences with a critical perspective and aims to identify injustices , power dynamics and imbalances of fairness and infringements of rights.

## Results

Explore working Clinical Associate experiences of professional socialization  
Identify the exclusionary and inclusionary features of professional socialization through narratives.

The findings will be categorized into themes which can be interpreted as empowering or disempowering features of an individuals developing professional identity.

## Methodology

**Research Design:** Qualitative study using Narrative Inquiry

**Research setting:** South Africa

**Population:** Clinical Associate students and qualified Clinical Associates in South Africa will be invited to participate in the study.

**Sampling:** Convenient sampling and Purposive sampling will be utilised.

**Data Collection:** Individual interviews using semi structured interview guide plus creative expression to draw

## Discussion

The findings will be instrumental for curriculum development and the development of policy recommendations. Current literature recommends a need for professional identity development to be intentionally attended to within curriculum in order to yield good outcomes from individual clinical practice.

The findings will be shared with department of health and stakeholders involved in the employment of clinical associates. The findings will be used to aid improved processes for the integration of clinical associates in medical teams.

## References

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