

Out of your vulnerabilities will come your strength.

SIGMUND FREUD
Austrian neurologist



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OPERATION HELPS CITY TODDLER BREATHE EASIER

Evan Koch, 2, is spending the new year a healthier person following a ground-breaking operation in a Cape Town hospital which saw his congenitally narrowed trachea (windpipe) widened – allowing him to breathe normally.



HEALTH

Passionate about healing

Specializing in surgeries to restore hearing, improvement of a hoarse voice and tonsil removals

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TO SEE a patient hear better, breathe freely for the first time or be free of pain are some of the outcomes that attracted two local ear, nose and throat (ENT) specialists to the job.

For Eve Samson, healing and helping others, and playing a role in the patient's journey keeps her motivated.

Samson, from Tamboerskloof, is an ENT specialist at Life Vincent Pallotti Hospital.

On occasion, she operates at other hospitals for particular cases.

The procedures Samson performs in-rooms include: earwax removal, grommet insertion, steroid injections through the ear drum into the middle ear and tongue-tie division.

Procedures Samson performs in theatre include: hearing restoration surgeries, closure of a hole in the ear drum, widening of the ear canal, the removal of tonsils and exostoses (surfer's ear), hoarse voice improvement and improvement of the airway.

Samson said her responsibilities were to heal and look after patients with honesty and integrity.

She added: "Our duties are to diag-



EAR, nose and throat specialist Eve Samson, above and below left, conducts an examination of the eardrum and nostrils on Amy Meyer via a microscope at Life Vincent Pallotti Hospital. Below right, Samson consults with Meyer and Zique Fredericks. | Pictures: SUPPLIED

nose a patient's condition and advise treatment and perform surgery when necessary.

"It feels natural to be in theatre doing surgeries.

"I enjoy the 100% focus and concentration required to be a surgeon."

Samson said other procedures she performed were sinusotomies, tonsillectomies and adenoidectomies.

She does about 50 grommet insertions a year.

She said among the reasons for the insertion of grommets insertion were: middle ear fluid accumulation, recurrent ear infections and pain relief in cases of middle ear infection with threatening perforation of the eardrum.

"Grommets should fall out between six months to a year, and usually the eardrum heals as the grommet comes out.

"It is extremely important to be calm under pressure so that you can think clearly and communicate well with others in your team," she said.

Samson wakes up at 6am and begins her day with yoga.

On arrival at work, she will do in-room consultations or surgeries.

This will differ on a daily basis.

On Thursdays, she will see cancer patients, along with a team of doctors.

When Samson gets home, she takes a walk with her dog, makes dinner and chats with her family before bed.

If there is an emergency, she will attend to that in the evenings, and sometimes on weekends.

"It was my dream to be a medical doctor.

"I have always enjoyed the surgical disciplines, and during my training I spent many years working in general surgery, plastic surgery and in gynaecology.

"I chose to specialise in ENT because I enjoy surgery in the head and neck, working around many important nerves and blood vessels.

"Sometimes it is tricky to get a good balance.

"Being single without children, I am lucky to not have a very demanding personal life, and I love my job and the people I work with," she added.

Meanwhile, Estie Meyer is an ENT specialist at Groote Schuur Hospital but also works at Victoria Hospital on



Tuesdays and sometimes at Somerset Hospital.

She specialises in dizzy patients, those with salivary gland problems and keyhole surgery for the ear, a surgical method used to access the interior of the body through a small incision, removing the need for open surgery.

"We do a few clinics that are just consulting (taking a history from the patient and examining it).

"ENT specialists have quite a lot of gadgets that we use to look into small, dark spaces.

"We also sometimes need to operate if medical treatment does not help and sometimes do combined clinics with other professions like audiologists, physiotherapists, speech therapists and oncologists," she said.

The procedures she performs in theatre include: straightening the inside of the nasal bone to help a patient breathe more easily, altering

the appearance of the nose and removing eye tumours via the nose without cutting on the outside.

"A problem with a nose can be life-changing, so we help with that and unfortunately we also sometimes need to operate on cancers.

"We can help patients that are off-balance or sometimes making a patient's voice louder can be life-changing," she said.

During her spare time, the mother of two enjoys playing the organ at church and also started ballroom classes recently.

"I pack their (the children's) breakfast, and even my clothes, the night before to minimise the rush.

"I sometimes have to say no when I just cannot fit it in.

"I had to learn that buying biscuits for school is okay and it does not have to be home-made," Meyer added.

“It was my dream to be a medical doctor. I enjoy performing surgeries

Eve Samson
ENT SPECIALIST



THE specialised procedures that Samson from Tamboerskloof performs include: earwax removal, grommet insertion, steroid injection through the eardrum into the middle ear, tongue-tie division, hearing restoration surgery, closure of a hole in the eardrum, widening of the ear canal, removal of exostoses (surfer's ear), removing tonsils, improvement of a hoarse voice and improvement of the airway. | SUPPLIED

OP RESTORED HEARING

WHEN her world went a little silent, it stopped her from living her life to the fullest.

Over the years, Carmaliter Davids, 35, from Mitchells Plain, always had issues with her hearing loss.

"My general practitioner always thought I was paranoid and did not take me seriously."

In May, Davids's sister went with her to the doctor, who convinced him that there really was a problem with her ears. He eventually gave her a referral letter to see an ear, nose and throat (ENT) specialist. She was diagnosed with otosclerosis by Azgher Karjeker, an ENT specialist at Life Vincent Pallotti Hospital and Netcare Christiaan Barnard Memorial Hospital. He then referred her to Eve Samson, an ENT specialist at Life Vincent Pallotti Hospital.

Davids presented with a significant hearing loss in both ears.

This is when the body develops extra bone in the middle ear that prevents sound conduction through the little bones in the middle ear.

Samson performed an operation to replace the stapes, the smallest bone in the body, with a special pin called a piston to restore her hearing.

"I knew if the operation was a success I would be able to do so much more than I could. I never realised that I had started to avoid large groups or loud places and even socialising with people outside of my immediate circle of family and friends. The hearing problem also made me speak softer and feel ashamed to tell strangers," Davids said.

During the earlier stages of the pandemic, Davids struggled to communicate as she could not lip-read when everyone began wearing masks.

"This was very socially isolating and made it difficult to perform at work. Being at a new workplace I knew it would have a huge impact on my success. None of my colleagues knew about my hearing problem and I assume most thought I was being rude or antisocial. However, my husband looked past that and saw the real me," she added.

Today, her hearing is restored and she is making the most of life.

BEATING CANCER CALMLY

BEING calm and positive assisted Vanessa Jacobs, 58, from Grassy Park, in the healing process after she was diagnosed with cancer last year.

In October 2018, her grandson died and she was constantly getting sick. Jacobs developed an ulcer on her tongue and was treated with antibiotics. Her treating doctor decided to refer her to an ear, nose and throat (ENT) specialist to do a biopsy, as the ulcer was not healing.

In January 2019, Azgher Karjeker, an ENT specialist at Life Vincent Pallotti Hospital and Netcare Christiaan Barnard Memorial Hospital, performed a biopsy and diagnosed a cancer in the left side of her tongue.

Jacobs was referred to Eve Samson, ENT specialist at Life Vincent Pallotti Hospital, for treatment.

Samson works with a team of doctors who specialise in head and neck cancer surgery management. The cancer was removed with surgery and the missing left side of her tongue replaced with skin and soft tissue from her arm.

This procedure is called a free flap. The arteries and veins of the arm tissue are attached to arteries and veins in the neck in order to provide the arm tissue that will be Jacobs' new tongue with a good blood supply. The lymph nodes in the neck were also removed surgically and she required radiotherapy post operatively.

"When I first found out, I was initially calm and remained positive. Being a God-fearing individual, I had put my trust in God to carry me through. Through both operations, I remained positive and this assisted in my healing process," she said.

Jacobs has been cancer-free for more than a year and credits her husband for being a constant pillar of support throughout her battle with cancer.

"The chemotherapy and radiation treatment took a toll on me and this led to me feeling like I could not carry on. This was a difficult time, but through the grace of God and the support of my family and support of my doctors I was able to finish the treatment. I thank them for what they have done for me," she said.