

**LESANG MOHOBELA, 25**  
**CANSA community mobiliser**

Working with cancer patients has been both amazing and astounding. I mobilise and create awareness around the community concerning the disease, with the entire Vaal Triangle under my jurisdiction. I've fallen in love with my job and the hours don't matter to me. I understand that what I'm doing is for the greater good and not about me.

Some of the people who I've interacted with don't even know what cancer is, so the way I educate people is important. Spreading the word on breast cancer in particular hasn't been easy, but the Cancer Association of South Africa (CANSA) has partnered with radio stations and community newspapers to get the word out. We also recruit and train volunteers.

Cancer has also affected my own life. After working with CANSA for just one year, my mother was diagnosed with cervical cancer. I'd already educated my family about it and she was in the first stage, so we were prepared. I had a breast cancer scare myself last year. I was doing a self-examination when I found a lump in my left breast. I immediately went to have it checked at the hospital. I had a sonar done and two palpable lumps were discovered. Fortunately everything seems okay now.

Emotionally the experience was one of shock, especially while sitting and waiting in the radiologist's room. It really gave me a wakeup call. I always tell people that you know your body the best. It's not taboo to touch yourself. Doing a breast self-examination at least once a month is crucial. Breast cancer knows no boundaries; it doesn't choose. We once saw a woman who was a two-time victim; she refused to tell her children about it and told them she had very bad asthma. She eventually asked us not to contact her anymore, which just contributes to the stigma that surrounds breast cancer in black communities.

I studied medical sociology, so I've always wanted to help people. We have a small clinic at our office that does breast examinations and pap smears. Afterwards, we refer people to specific hospitals in and around the area. I left my life in the corporate world because I felt that I wasn't growing, and this is how I've chosen to fulfil my purpose.



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