

10 YEAR CELEBRATION REPORT



RMA MEDICAL DEPARTMENT AND MOBILE PROSTHETIC TEAM IS CELEBRATING A DECADE OF MOBILE PROSTHETIC SERVICES

We are proud to announce the achievement of a decade of dedicated mobile prosthetic services to RMA beneficiaries.

THE RMA MOBILE PROSTHETIC CLINIC STORY – BY MARISSA NEL

Everything starts with a dream, perhaps as a thought, or a mental image; 10 years ago we had a dream, a dream to ultimately improve the quality of life of disabled people living in rural areas, by delivering sustainable prosthetic services via an equipped mobile prosthetic clinic to them at their doorstep.

I am a firm believer in creating your own miracles, when you know what you want and adopt a positive attitude, have an inspiring dedicated team and then take action by participating in the creation of the dream, do proper planning, visualizing the outcome, have great expectations, and then act you will see your dreams materialize.



In May 2005 the mobile vehicle was purchased, a specially designed container was built in Durban and delivered to East London, where proposed designed cupboards and worktops were fitted. A uniquely designed router and other equipment was made and fitted in the vehicle.

A generator was fitted underneath the container to power all machinery including an oven, hand tools and air conditioner. Most of the equipment to be mobile; was designed to be removable and have a fully operational workshop outside in the fresh air.

With great excitement we finally took delivery of our brand new vehicle and off we went to our first mobile clinic to test everything out.

Obviously this maiden voyage to Lusikisiki, Bizana, Flagstaff and Mthatha exposed all the minor and major flaws in our design enthusiasm.

The sewing machine, which almost ended up on the driver's lap, had to be properly secured and bolted to the floor. A special water tank and plaster container was fitted, tools were secured more firmly. Despite all these things we conducted a very successful clinic in the EC and managed to do all repairs and maintenance on sight.

The initial concept for the Mobile Unit was to perform repairs on site and issue sundries to create accessible and convenient service to pensioners. Subsequent to the first trip we realized that this concept needed to be expanded into a full manufacturing unit, which the Mobile Clinic has performed admirably to date.

After all the changes were done we managed the unthinkable and crossed the borders of Mozambique without our permanent license disc. (I don't have to tell you that this exercise took about 5 years of my life), but thanks to some back up from RMA head office helping us organize letters and documents we managed fine.

The golden rule when traveling in Mozambique DO NOT TRAVEL AT NIGHT, we arrived in Maxixe at 21:30 in the evening expecting the worst but managed to get there hungry but unscathed.

THE MOBILE CLINIC WAS SET UP THE NEXT DAY AND ALL EQUIPMENT WAS TESTED

With great excitement our patients arrived in Maxixe and could not believe that they were going to receive their prostheses the next day. We took most of the day to screen the patients, with screening completed we set out to our mobile workshop where we first did all maintenance and repairs.

We then started manufacturing the new prostheses and worked until the early morning hours of the next day. The joy and appreciation on our patient's faces when they fitted their new legs was the most rewarding experience, these smiles of appreciation motivated us to improve on our model of service delivery.

Our next milestone which will be etched in my memory until the day I leave this earth was early 2006 when willpower completely eliminated all fear and we set out on a remarkable journey from Eastern Cape to Gauteng, through Mozambique to Malawi.

Nothing had prepared the team for the delays experienced at border posts, for officials trying to extort bribes, potholes the size of trailers, entire roads having turned into rivers and ongoing rains almost from the date the team left.

However equipped with iron determination to make this first trip to Malawi succeed and a dedicated team, who enjoyed this adventure tremendously, the clinic arrived in Malawi on time and serviced 131 pensioners, working right through many a night in heavy rain, having to cope with very problematic conditions.

The above experience confirmed that the delivery of a comprehensive service including manufacturing can be achieved anywhere under extremely trying conditions.

Since then many more clinics were held at various locations including the Eastern Cape, Kwazulu Natal, Swaziland, Lesotho, Mozambique and Malawi during the last 10 years just over 10 000 prosthetic reviews were conducted.

During the years our services expanded to additional projects including enterprise development and social assistance the RMA beneficiaries enrolled in the Pensioners medical program.





OUR PASSION IS TO IMPROVE QUALITY LIFE OF DISABLED PEOPLE AND WE CONTINUOUSLY SPEND OUR TIME AND ENERGY TO CREATE AWARENESS

During March 2013 the entire RMA team had the opportunity to experience disability and value mobility, the disability campaign increased understanding for our Pensioners.

What started as a rural mobile maintenance plan 10 years ago with the desire to improve on-site service has now grown to be a much loved, caring and compassionate service to RMA beneficiaries living in rural areas.

10 years is a milestone of great significance to the Mobile Prosthetic team and RMA medical department not only are we celebrating 10 years of mobile prosthetic services but expanding the service to enterprise development and life opportunities of the underprivileged living within the communities of our pensioners.

We have a great vision for the future which will ensure the inclusion and equal participation for persons with disabilities in all aspects of life in South Africa and Africa.