

DISCOVERY INITIATIVE

Impressed patients give the nod to city's most caring angels

Sipokazi Fokazi
HEALTH WRITER

EVEN AS a child growing up in Mitchells Plain, Charles Mitchell, 30, had a burning desire to nurse.

And after years of volunteering at Mitchells Plain community health centre, assisting nurses with anything from minor procedures such as wound dressing to helping with administration, he finally got his big break.

Seven years ago he got an opportunity to train as a nurse at Melomed Mitchells Plain Hospital.

But Mitchell would soon learn that his hard work as a nurse was not always appreciated by those he served.

"A lot of patients are grateful for the service that nurses provide, but there's always those who complain no matter how hard you work," he said. "As a nurse you can easily be discouraged by that attitude. In the private sector you get it a lot because clients tell you they have paid money for the service you are giving them. But as you gain experience you just take those in your stride... After all nursing is my passion."

Mitchell's hard work was rewarded recently when his patients nominated him for Discovery Excellence Awards for Nurses – a new award initiative by Discovery Health to recognise nurses for their role.

The medical scheme's members acknowledge nurses who stood out in providing care during their hospitalisation. More than 40 nurses were recognised in the first round of quarterly awards.

The quarterly winners go through a judging process with an independent panel drawn from local academic institutions and the SA Nursing Council. The annual winners receive cash prizes ranging from R50 000 to R100 000, with an all-expenses paid learning opportunity at top teaching international hospitals.



EXCEPTIONAL: From left, Charles Mitchell, Clinton van Wyk and Mariam Brown attend to patient, Fareeda Esau at Gatesville Melomed

PICTURE: TRACEY ADAMS



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For Mitchell the award is even more special as it came from patients.

"If it was an award I entered I would always think that maybe I acted up a little bit to appeal to patients, but the nice thing about it is that patients chose me for who I am. I didn't have to act to get their attention," he said.

His colleague, Clinton van Wyk, who has been a nurse for six years, said the latest award encouraged him to do even more.

"I'm not sure why people felt that I

was outstanding for them... maybe my personality impressed them. I'm a very talkative and bubbly person, and I always share jokes with patients."

Van Wyk said that since he was presented with the award last week his colleagues had taken notice.

"People come to me and tell me how encouraged they are by our awards. I think that's a good thing... clearly this is rubbing on to other people to do more," he said.

But for Mariam Brown, 64, who has

been nursing since the age of 17, the award has a deeper meaning.

"This is my first award in my career of 43 years. So you can imagine how pleased I am. It's a very special recognition... I think the fact that I didn't expect it and the recognition comes from patients themselves and not the management of the hospital, makes it even more special. As a nurse the first person you want to satisfy is a patient and everyone else comes after that."

sipokazi.fokazi@i.nl.co.za