

## Proudly Announces the Physician, Midwife or Nurse Practitioner of the Month for September 2021



### Dr. Pieter Aartsma

### Psychiatry

The VJHPS is pleased to announce **Dr. Pieter Aartsma as September's 2021 Physician of the Month**. We salute Dr. Aartsma for exemplifying the qualities of an excellent physician, and we are pleased to have Dr. Aartsma as a respected member of our medical staff since June 2019.

### Background and Training

**Medical school:** University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, South Africa

**Residency:** University of Stellenbosch, Cape Town, South Africa

### Nominator's Comments (Dr. Noha Fossen):

When I was tasked to pass on the torch, so many people came to mind. But then, I thought to myself "*Who are the hidden gems? The quiet heroes?*", and that's when I decided to nominate someone from the department of Psychiatry. The pandemic has hit us in different ways and the media has done a great job at showcasing the physical effects and ailments COVID has had on people and the "front-line" health heroes who are battling it head on. What is perhaps not depicted as transparently is the toll it has taken on people's mental health and the endless work psychiatrists have taken on, trying to treat those invisible wounds in order to help these members of our community, some perhaps amongst us, to function and be better. This is why I consider it an honor nominating Dr Aarstma and having this opportunity to get to know him on a more personal level.

We sat down at Ratio on a sunny afternoon and while I enjoyed my espresso, he sipped on a decaf latte. Even though we had only ever crossed paths briefly with the occasional "*Hello! How are you?*", his unassuming presence was calming and I immediately felt comfortable, as though I was sitting with a long-time pal.

Originally from South Africa, Dr Aarstma joined VJH in June 2019 following a 2 year stint in Monaghan, Ireland, where he worked as a community psychiatrist. He tells me he was always intrigued with biology and his uncle, an ophthalmologist, sparked his interest in medicine. He naturally gravitated towards Psychiatry as he always found the connection between mental and physical health fascinating. When I asked him how he felt Psychiatry fell into medicine as a whole, he explained how he often felt it to be under-represented, and at times, misunderstood. Dr Aarstma has improved patient care at VJH by being an integral part of the Child & Youth Psychiatry Services, specifically the Youth Eating Disorder Program. He lists patience and being even-tempered as some of his greatest qualities.

In addition to being a physician, Dr Aarstma is the father of 3 daughters, each of whom was born on a different continent! Though he doesn't play any instruments, he enjoys listening to a variety of genres from classical to jazz to singer-songwriter stuff. He enjoys hiking, cross-country skiing, biking and oil painting. He in fact promised me an original (*just kidding!*). Described as a coffee fanatic, he has taken barista classes as he is mesmerized by the art and chemistry of coffee. He usually limits himself to 3 cups/day and usually favors espresso based drinks and consumes only decaf after 12pm. He loves suspense novels and suggests reading Origin by Dan Brown.

As far as favorite things, he lists his wife - Lize - first and foremost and describes her as his rock, his anchor and biggest supporter. He loves sushi, which comes as a close second to "*braai*", which is a traditional South African spread of grilled meats (so kind of like a BBQ, but with a bit more pzazz). He misses his family back in South Africa and would therefore, without hesitation, choose teleportation as his superpower. He would teleport directly to Table Mountain in Cape Town for some R&R.

Thank you again for all that you do. Your contribution to our community does not go unnoticed and we are lucky to have you here! Congratulations Dr Aarstma!

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