

In conversation with

Belinda Lombard

Belinda hails from Pretoria - born and raised. She holds a BSc in Mathematics and Computer Science from UCT, and an Honours in Biomathematics from Stellenbosch University. She is currently in her first year of her Masters in Epidemiology (Applied Mathematics) with SACEMA, Stellenbosch University.

“People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel” - Maya Angelou



What lead you to choose epidemiological modelling?

I've always had quite a curiosity when it comes to disease-related research fields such as vaccinology and epidemiology. The pandemic hitting us in my final year of undergraduate really sparked that interest more. In the beginning of the pandemic, I undertook a part-time job where I had to read in COVID-19 data daily. I always questioned this data and the statistics and models that are influenced by it. When I saw the option for a Biomathematics Honours where I could focus on epidemiology, I immediately got super excited, since that would allow me to use what I've always loved doing (mathematics) in a field that I'm very curious about, especially during COVID-19. I enjoyed the disease-related courses we did during Honours (especially MMED) and my passion for epidemiological modelling started growing more.

What's the best advice you were ever given? Who was it from?

There is something that someone told me recently that I've been applying a lot in my life lately since I easily regret decisions and I have severe 'Fear of missing out' (FOMO): "If you regret a choice you have made, don't be hard on yourself and rather tell yourself that when you made this decision, it was because in that moment you thought that this would be the best for you. Even if it was a mistake, you should rather try to see the value of this decision (whether you have learnt a lesson, gained experience somewhere or got to know yourself better)."

What kind of activities energize you?

Without a doubt, travelling. I'd spend every cent I have to see new places in South Africa and in the world. I also love spending time with family and/or friends. I play piano and I'm currently busy with my practical and theory exams. Preparing for these is an activity that energizes me. Finally, running and walking - I aim to do a Parkrun every Saturday as that really really excites me.

