

# Healing hands...and feet

 By [Nicci Botha](#)

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Healer, teacher, runner. When she's not caring for patients or passing on her knowledge to the next generations of surgeons, Dr Karin Baatjes is pounding the tarmac to raise money for prostheses for breast cancer survivors.

She's a general surgeon with a specific interest in breast cancer and endocrine surgery and a clinical teacher at Stellenbosch University. But she also raises funds for [Reach for Recovery](#) through her kb for [ditto campaign](#) for patients who cannot afford a permanent prosthesis. In April Baatjes married her two passions, when she raised a whopping R57,000 for the programme by running the West Coast Marathon.

According to [Cansa](#), breast cancer is the most common cancer in women of all races, with a lifetime risk of one in 33 in South Africa, after non-melanoma skin cancer.



## ■ What inspired you to choose this particular field?

**Baatjes:** I find the work very fulfilling. Making a difference in a patient's condition with my hands is very rewarding. I enjoy the student teaching component of my work and try my utmost to guide the young to become ethically sound doctors. My research interests has evolved over the years and now form a large and gratifying section of my work.

## ■ What do you love most about your job?

**Baatjes:** The fact that I can do good with my hands. The interaction with patients is priceless, you get a bird's eye view of life's most exciting, most treasured and saddest moments. It keeps me humble. Patients come into our care and we get the opportunity to assist them, but within that lies a huge responsibility as well.

## ■ If you could choose any other career, what would it be?

**Baatjes:** I would like to be a writer. Mostly of poetry, or perhaps food and travel writing.

## ■ What makes you happy (things outside of work)?

**Baatjes:** My family first and foremost and thereafter my long-standing friendships. I enjoy running. I have done several

paces over the last few years. I always loathe getting up before dawn, but once that start gun goes, it is all worth it.

## ABOUT NICCI BOTHA

Nicci Botha has been wordsmithing for more than 20 years, covering just about every subject under the sun and then some. She's strung together words on sustainable development, maritime matters, mining, marketing, medical, lifestyle... and that elixir of life - chocolate. Nicci has worked for local and international media houses including Primedia, Caxton, Lloyd's and Reuters. Her new passion is digital media.

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