

## Ntebele Ruth Tladi:



My name is Ntebele Ruth Felecia Tladi. I was diagnosed with MS, RA and Diffuse Scleroderma in 2009 in April, prior that I have been sick throughout my high school years and no one knew for sure what was wrong with me. My aunt was worried and at some point my eyes were operated on because of a sudden migraine and temporary blindness in 2011, the specialist said I had an infection.



In 2009 around Easter holidays the same migraine hit me while I was in church and my sister in law accompanied me to a local Doctor, there I got a refer letter so that I can be properly checked at Charlotte Maxeke Academic Hospital. I was really scared, I thought I had finally lost my sight. Only a day passed then when I got back to Johannesburg my cousin sister immediately came to accompany me to the hospital with my aunt and my late brother. So many tests were done that day I was even bluish in color and on the first two days there, the first thing that was picked up was the Diffuse Scleroderma because of the Raynaud's phenomenon. It took them a month to diagnose MS. I was temporarily paralyzed, and I was helpless, I stayed longer at hospital because of that. I to physio as many more tests were done until I got diagnosed with RA (Rheumatoid Arthritis).

My journey has been a scary one, I had just turned 19 while in hospital and no one knew how to be there for me. After I had fully regained my mobility which was four months later, I focused on wanting to study again but unfortunately, I just couldn't. I was just a hospital resident. At home I was a bit of a rebel because I wanted to live and have fun because I wasn't given long to live. In 2014 I started looking for support groups for both MS and Scleroderma then I came across Madelaine Du Toit online who then came to visit in Soweto. That's how I became part of the MSSA team and rare diseases. In 2016 I decided on taking a more holistic approach and I only go to the hospital for checkups and not for medication. My reason was that since the medication I am taking clashes what should I do because I was tired of living like a lab rat and just being sick all the time. At moment I'm glad there's support and I now understand my body more, knowing that I'm not alone gives me hope and I'll continue to spread awareness so people know about MS.