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# Case studies that relate to understanding heart failure in a multicultural society

## Mary



Mary, 30 years old, was diagnosed with heart failure last year. She lives in a state-subsidised home and has had four children. A few weeks after the birth of the youngest one, now aged three years, she increasingly became short of breath on exertion and developed orthopnoea and paroxysmal nocturnal dyspnoea. At present she

has gross oedema, ascites and a pleural effusion. The diagnosis of dilated cardiomyopathy has been made.

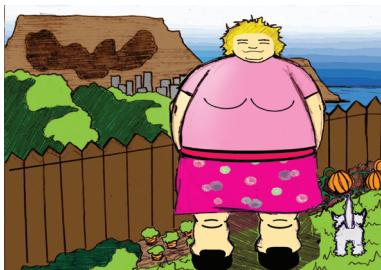
## Zindi



Zindi, a 15-year-old girl living in an overcrowded part of Soweto with her parents, two younger brothers and an older sister, had an acute illness when she was six years of age. She developed severe fever and had a migrating arthritis involving larger joints such as her ankles, knees, elbows and wrists.

This had been preceded three weeks earlier by a sore throat. At the age of 10 years, she became fatigued, short of breath and developed heart failure. She was diagnosed as having chronic rheumatic heart disease, mitral valve stenosis and incompetence.

## Rosie



Rosie, a 72-year-old obese lady has diabetes and heart failure with atrial fibrillation. She tries to remain active by gardening in their small vegetable patch. She and her husband live in a small village on the outskirts of Cape Town. They also have a dog. Two grown-up daughters live independently in Port Elizabeth. She developed nocturnal dyspnoea and ankle oedema, beginning four years previously.

## William



William is 60 years old and works as a security agent taking care of office buildings. At 30 years old, he came to the city from a small village in the Transkei and frequently went back to see his wife and children who had not made the move with him.

William is a heavy smoker. He was diagnosed with having hypertension at the age of 50. Due to his work and living conditions, he did not comply well with the treatment received from the local hospital clinic. He developed breathlessness, and further investigations revealed that he had left ventricular hypertrophy. His condition deteriorated and he is now living with his three sons who came to the city after their mother died.

## George



George is 65 years old and a retired bank manager. He has been very fit in the past but became aware of chest pains and some shortness of breath when exercising. He loves playing golf, but found it increasingly difficult because of the long walks and having to stop at times because of pain or shortness of breath. He lives with his wife and daughter in an up-market part of Cape Town. Investigations supported the diagnosis of coronary artery disease.