

Remembering Professor Peter Jacobs (21 March 1934 – 18 November 2013)

Professor Peter Jacobs passed away in Cape Town on November 18th, in his 80th year. He had been unwell for the past year, but this did not prevent him from being very active and inspiring, as always in his long and remarkable career.

The Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences at Cape Town University, Professor Wim de Villiers, remembered him saying: *“Peter Jacobs had a long and eventful career after becoming the foundation head of the Department of Haematology at UCT in 1972, a post he held until his retirement from UCT in 1994. He then continued to work in private practice and developed the Bone Marrow Transplant Unit at Constantiaberg hospital which he ran until his final retirement in February 2011. He was central to the development of Haematology as a discipline in South Africa and was instrumental in the development of bone marrow transplantation in this country. He contributed to many professional societies and was the recipient of many awards for his unstinting efforts as a teacher and innovator in the field of haematology. His energy and work ethic were legendary in the Faculty during his years in office, and he will be fondly remembered by scores of students who benefited from his approach to both undergraduate and postgraduate teaching during his long academic career.”*

Peter Jacobs was born and educated in South Africa, and over the years he made a huge impact on the development of hematology in that country and played a pioneering role in performing the first stem cell transplant in South Africa back in 1974. He has been a guiding figure in hematology in South Africa in clinical practice, training and research. He has held many posts: Professor of Haematology (later Professor Emeritus), University of Cape Town; Director, University of Cape Town Leukaemia Centre; Honorary Professor of Haematology, Stellenbosch University and Tygerberg Academic Hospital; Foundation Professor and Head, Division of Clinical Haematology – Department of Internal Medicine, Stellenbosch University and Tygerberg Academic Hospital; Honorary Professor, Division of Haematopathology - Department of Pathology Stellenbosch University and Tygerberg Academic Hospital; Professor Extraordinaire, Division of Haematological Pathology, Faculty of Health Sciences, Stellenbosch University; Director, South African Bone Marrow Registry.

At the same time, Professor Jacobs gained a broad international reputation. Over the years, he has received innumerable achievements, prizes, invitations and international recognition, well beyond the boundaries of South Africa. Among these, he has been: President of the Southern African Society of Haematology; Founder Member of the South African Society of Medical Oncology, South African Lymphoma Study Group and of the South African Bone Marrow Registry; Member of the Board of Directors for America, African Countries, Asia and Pacific Countries, European Society for Haemapheresis; Professor of Internal Medicine, College of Medicine, University of Nebraska Medical Center. In addition, he built a wide network of personal relationships with his friends and colleagues worldwide.



Peter Jacobs 1934-2013.

On a more personal note, it is within this invaluable network that a couple of years ago we informally considered the possibility of organizing an EHA event together in South Africa. This took place successfully in Cape Town in May 2013. If it had not been for Peter's determination and charisma, the event (the first one held by EHA in sub-Saharan Africa) would not have been possible. We were proud that we could gather hematologists not only from South Africa, but also from many neighboring countries, and were delighted with the outcome of the meeting. Peter was already ill, but the organization went forward as if nothing had happened, and during the days of the event he never missed a session or a social event. He only left the official dinner with his wife before coffee was served. This is how we like to remember him, energetic, ironic, interactive, and surrounded by colleagues of all ages.

It is no surprise that the obituary from the University of Stellenbosch closes by saying: *“Professor Jacobs we salute and thank you for all you have done for Haematology in South Africa”*. Words that pay tribute to a remarkable man who will be remembered in the hematology community.

He is survived by his wife, Di, and their two sons, Sean and Wayne, to whom we convey our sincere condolences.

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