

Editor's comment

Professor Ralph Kirsch



BRIDGET FARHAM
ugqirha@iafrica.com

My mentor, friend and colleague died yesterday. Although his death was not unexpected, it has left an enormous gap, both personally and professionally.

On a personal level, I first met Ralph as a student, as I am sure was the case with many of my readers. As a teacher he was superb. He brought passion to his enormous knowledge of internal medicine. This inspiration was behind the many hours I spent in the wards, often simply talking to patients, learning medicine hands-on. His emphasis on the importance of detail – a careful history, a meticulous examination – stayed with me through my relatively brief clinical career. His approach was one of analysis and problem solving; investigations were only useful if they were going to change management – an approach that is sadly lacking in today's world of hi-tech medicine, with the poor

bewildered patient left somewhere in the middle.

I was privileged to be a houseman in his firm – not an easy option by any means! We worked hard but the rewards were great and it was here that the foundations that were laid down as a student came to full fruition, leaving me with a love of internal medicine that has never left me.

Ralph was chair of the undergraduate medical education committee while I was a student and I was a member of this committee for most of my clinical undergraduate years. The meetings were long – Ralph always loved to talk – but the discussions were interesting and rewarding. I used to look forward to an afternoon spent in these interesting discussions as a break from the hard work of the clinical teaching years. We achieved much, not least the start of programmes

to ensure that previously disadvantaged (then very much disadvantaged) students succeeded once they had made it to UCT medical school.

As editor of *CME* my relationship with Ralph continued. The journal is 27 years old – quite an achievement – and it was Ralph's 'baby'. Professor JP van Niekerk tells me that he never thought it would succeed! How wrong he was. Ralph never lost his passion for the publication and was intimately involved until his recent illness. We didn't always agree, but we disagreed cheerfully and the discussions that ensued from disagreements over the layout or my approach to content always led to a careful reassessment and hopefully some major improvements to the journal over the years. I will miss his input.

Hamba kahle, dear friend.

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Tel. (021) 681-7200 Fax (021) 685-1395 E-mail: publishing@hmpg.co.za

Head Office: PO Box 74789, Lynnwood Ridge, 0040. Tel. (012) 481-2000 Fax (012) 481-2100

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