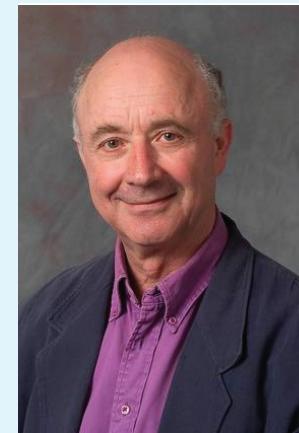


Aubrey Sheiham

12 September 1936 - 24 November 2015

The death of Aubrey Sheiham has been received with great sadness by his friends and colleagues across the world but particularly in South Africa where he was born and obtained the Bachelor of Dental Surgery degree at the University of Witwatersrand. Although he had left the country shortly after graduation in the 1960s, his roots, contact and heart were very much with its peoples. He never forgot to offer his advice and support to the oppressed peoples during the long difficult years of apartheid. Many young graduates from the developing world including South Africa received their postgraduate training and higher degrees in dental public health under the mentorship of Aubrey. He was an outspoken and courageous visionary and an inspiring advocate of promoting dental public health as part of general health for the populations at large and especially for the poorer parts of the world. He had demonstrated convincingly through his research, scholarship, teaching and intellectual grasp of his discipline that we needed to transcend the drill and fill approach to a preventive and promotive philosophy if a difference for the better is to be made for health of populations rather than the privileged few. An impressive list of publications, books and lecturing engagements would bear testimony to his devotion and single-mindedness in trying to achieve this objective. During his career Aubrey published over 500 articles and supervised 52 PhD students from 20 countries.



Aubrey Sheiham

Aubrey's 1977 publication in the Lancet questioned the wisdom of the six monthly dental check. He demonstrated the danger of dentists intervening too quickly, resulting in over-treatment. Although he was heavily criticised by the profession for this point of view, he was vindicated by the Guidelines of the National Institute of Health and Care Excellence, published in 2004.

Early in his professional career Aubrey highlighted the importance of sugar as not only a prime aetiological factor in dental caries but as a major risk factor for general health. Recent research has again supported this pioneering advocacy. While the major thrust of the dental profession has been on technological advancement, specialisation, the individual practice and the individual patient, Aubrey emphasised population thinking and in particular the social determinants of health. This philosophy if followed may be the only feasible approach in controlling and preventing oral and dental disease especially in the populations of the developing world.

Aubrey's international reputation is marked by his receiving Honorary Doctorates from the University of Athens and the University of Western Cape, and the Distinguished Scientist Global Oral Health research award from the International Association of Dental Research.

On a personal level I am grateful to Aubrey Sheiham for being a friend, mentor and inspiration during my professional career as a lecturer at the Eastman Dental Hospital, London, as Dean of the Faculty of Dentistry, University of Western Cape and as Vice-Chancellor at the University of Durban-Westville. More recently, Aubrey provided invaluable advice to the Steering Committee which is planning the Faculty of Dentistry at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Aubrey and Helena's generosity is marked by their leaving a sizeable endowment to the University of Witwatersrand and for funding researchers from the developing world to complete an evidence-based Cochrane Health Care Review each year.

He will be greatly missed by his friends and colleagues and he will be remembered for his monumental contribution to the health profession and in particular to dental public health.

Our thoughts and our support go out to his wife Helena and other members of his family at this difficult time.

Photograph: acknowledgement to Oliver Curry

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