

Christopher C Rachanis

15th October 1929 to 18th February 2019

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Dentistry lost an icon when Chris Rachanis passed away. Being dual qualified in Medicine and Dentistry, Chris was able to bring clear perspectives to Oral Medicine, as will readily testify the literally hundreds of Wits graduates who sat at his feet absorbing insights into his cherished field.

But it did not stop with undergraduates for Chris was well known for his willingness to help all members of the oral health team ...dentists, doctors, hygienists, therapists... who held him in high esteem, appreciated his expertise and valued his generous friendship.



Dr Rachanis was schooled at Parktown Boys High and Benoni High Schools, and entered a prolonged academic career when he registered for a BA degree at Wits. Over the next several years he graduated BA, BSc, BDS at Wits (1957) and then travelled to England to complete the double with an MB BCH from Sheffield, followed by a Fellowship from the Royal College of Surgeons, Glasgow in 1971. A perennial student indeed!

Between 1960 and 1975, Chris held posts at several hospitals in the United Kingdom, notably the London Hospital where he was a lecturer in Oral Medicine, Periodontology and Oral Pathology from 1969 to 1974.

On his return to South Africa he lasted only a few months as a Casualty Officer at the Johannesburg Hospital before academe again beckoned. Wits Dental welcomed him in 1976 and became his academic home for the next forty years! He worked closely with Professor Mervyn Shear and Professor John Lemmer ...an impressive team indeed!

The familiar figure of Dr Rachanis in the clinic... constantly involved in ensuring patients were properly diagnosed, that students understood and recognized the oral medicine presented, that his cheerful good humour spread content across the room. Always so willing to share of his extensive knowledge, Chris happily undertook additional after hours seminars and tutorials to help his students.

He published several papers but it was the personal delivery that Chris really enjoyed and he received many invitations to deliver papers at congresses and courses, travelling to

branch meetings across and beyond South Africa. He developed particular acumen in the scourge of HIV and contributed to the management of the dreaded disease in our country.

A dedicated and green fingered gardener, a Doberman and Collie enthusiast, an avid reader of the literature... and in his latter years, a computer addict.



Christopher C Rachanis
December 2013

Johan Langenneger, a friend of many years, delivered a moving tribute to Chris at the funeral service, recalling just how much Chris had missed his wife, Colleen, who passed away some six years ago. Johan closed with the words... "Goodbye Chris, we will never forget you".

