

Prof Mervyn Shear

... a towering presence in Oral Pathology

Professor Mervyn Shear made immense contributions to the discipline of Oral Pathology and indeed was the founder of the speciality in South Africa, holding the first Chair of Oral Pathology in the country.

He graduated BDS from Wits in 1964, Neil to MDS (Oral Pathology) in 1961 and to the FRC (Pathology) from the Royal College of Pathologists in 1965. His passion for the discipline motivated his determination that Oral Pathology should be affiliated to Anatomical Pathology, a relationship which has ensured maximum exposure for South African registrars in Oral Pathology.

Perhaps a signal event in the professional life of Prof Shear was his publication in 2007 of a book which was to become the authoritative reference on the subject... "Cysts of the Oral and Maxillofacial regions". This has now had four revisions, the latest being in 2017, now with a co-author, Paul Speight. In so many Departments of Oral Pathology this book has contributed to the erudition of students, both undergraduate and postgraduate.

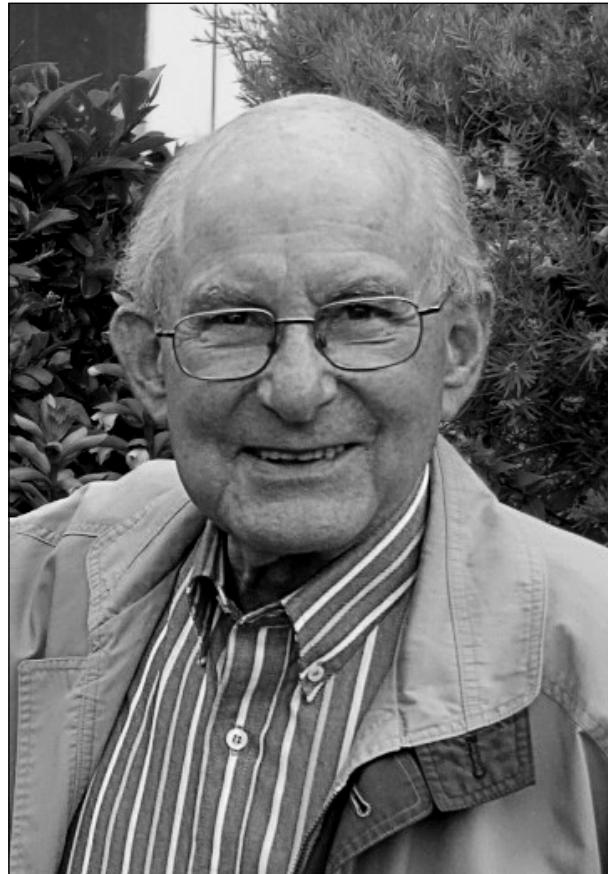
Whilst a perusal of his long list of publications (over 115 papers) shows that Mervyn maintained his primary interest in cysts, he also made important contributions to the identification, interpretation and etiology of oral malignancies and explored biochemical activities in the salivary glands. A superb lecturer, Professor Shear was able to convey both his vast knowledge and his commitment to his subject to innumerable dental students... and to the many international conferences where he was a popular and respected speaker.

Indeed, Mervyn was recognised as a leading expert in the discipline by the award of honorary doctorates from Wits and the University of Pretoria, and honorary degrees from The College of Medicine of South Africa. He held positions on several international bodies and was Visiting Professor at three major universities. The publications have been cited on more than three and a half thousand occasions ...an indication of just how seminal a role Professor Shear played in the global arena of Oral Pathology.

But Professor Shear also had a vital commitment to society and during the time of the controversial Extension of the Universities Act, he participated in many demonstrations and protests. He was a champion of the opening of access to tertiary education. On one such occasion he received a rubber bullet to his body, suffering considerable bruising.

On the Dental Association side, Mervyn was actively involved and served as Editor of the South African Dental Journal, working closely with Professor Frikkie van Reenen. Under their guidance the Journal achieved recognition as contributing meaningfully to dental knowledge.

BDS (Rand),
MDS (Oral Pathology) (Rand),
FRC Path (Royal College of Pathologists),
DSc (Dentistry) (Wits)



Professor Mervyn Shear - an expert in the discipline of Oral Pathology (1931 - 2017)

In 1973 Professor Shear received the highest accolade from Wits. the DSc, honoris causa. He held the post of Deputy Vice Chancellor at the University from 1983 to 1990.

The profession lost a true champion when Professor Shear passed away on 24th January 2017.

Acknowledgement

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