

Professor Carel J Mieny

16 July 1931 – 3 July 2021

Professor Carel Mieny, former Head of the Department of Surgery at the University of Pretoria and an early pioneer in establishing liver transplantation in South Africa, died in Pretoria on 3 July 2021. He qualified MBChB at the University of Pretoria in 1954 and did his internship at Pretoria General Hospital. To broaden his medical horizons Carel travelled to the UK, where he worked in several London hospitals and on his return to South Africa he delved into the surgical realm by joining the neurosurgical team in Pretoria. In 1958 he decided to pursue a career in surgery and was appointed as a surgical registrar at the University of the Witwatersrand where he obtained the FCS(SA) in 1960. In 1962 he joined Professor Ian Aird's at The Royal Postgraduate Medical School in London. Whilst in the UK, he obtained the London and Edinburgh FRCS. On his return to South Africa, he was appointed as senior surgeon in the professorial unit at the Johannesburg General Hospital. Four years later, he was awarded the ChM degree for a thesis entitled 'The effects of arterial occlusion on atheroma'.

In 1966 Carel received a research grant from the John Hartford Foundation for a research project on liver perfusion with Professor Ben Eiseman in Lexington, Kentucky. In 1967 he moved to Denver, Colorado, and was involved in the first successful liver transplant in the USA, performed by Dr Thomas Starzl. Based on research done in Denver, a thesis entitled 'Eksperimentele voorbereiding vir kliniese leweroorplanting' was submitted to the University of Pretoria as partial fulfilment of his MD degree. On his return to South Africa, Carel was promoted to Professor of Surgery at the University of the Witwatersrand and principal surgeon at the JG Strydom Hospital.

In 1971 he visited Professor Hans Beger and Professor Michael Trede in Germany, and subsequently the UK, with the aid of research grants from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation and the Ernest Oppenheimer Trust.

In 1977 Carel was appointed Professor and Head of the Department of Surgery and chief surgeon at the HF Verwoerd Hospital. During his term, he organised the first symposium on Controversies in Surgery in 1981, which has now become an annual event in the South African surgical calendar.

Recognising the need of registrars in training, he arranged the first Registrar Symposium with the support of Ethicon in 1982 to help them with their preparation for the FCS final examination – a meeting which has continued and grown in stature over the years.

He was a dedicated teacher of several generations of students and specialist surgeons during a long academic career. He published an undergraduate textbook that was used by students for many years. Carel played an important role in the administration of surgery training in South Africa by his election to several senior posts in the Colleges of Medicine of South Africa as well as the College of Surgeons.



He also held, at various times, the presidency of several professional societies, notably SAGES and the Transplant Society. He stepped down as chairman of the department in 1992 but continued as an active full-time surgeon for several years thereafter.

Apart from his distinguished academic career, Carel Mieny had a diverse repertoire of intriguingly interesting pastimes and pursuits. He was an avid bibliophile and had an extensive library of Africana. Carel was an excellent raconteur and could converse with authority and enthusiasm on his favourite pastimes which included fauna and flora, hunting, angling and particularly classical music. His presentations on "Composers and their Ailments" were widely appreciated. His contributions to the arts were recognised by the Afrikaans "Akademie vir Taal, Kuns en Wetenskap" with an honours award.

He was an avid and competitive sportsman who enjoyed tennis, golf and bowls when he got older. He also enjoyed playing social bridge with his wife and friends. For total relaxation, Carel would "go to the Bush" to hunt or fish – pastimes which he enjoyed the most. His son Jean-Pierre said: "I was privileged to have such a loving and caring father, whose passion and ability to teach and explain I could only really appreciate once I had my own children."

Carel was a truly balanced person who made an indelible impression on those who met him and on the surgical community of Pretoria and indeed South Africa. He was a loving father, husband and a doting grandfather who always had the best interests of his family at heart. Our sympathies go to his loving wife Marianne, his son Jean-Pierre and his four grandchildren.

Hennie Becker, in conjunction with colleagues, friends and family.