

OBITUARIES/HULDEBLYKE

Ajay Makanjee



This tribute to Dr Ajay Makanjee, general surgeon and founding member of the KwaZulu-Natal Specialist Network, was extracted from a eulogy at his memorial service.

Ajay was born in Durban to Jaymati and Amaratal Makanjee on 13 November 1959. He matriculated at the Gandhi Desai School in Durban and then attended medical school at the University of Natal, graduating in 1982.

At medical school, his habit of questioning his teachers whenever he saw a reason to challenge their views raised the ire of many. He also refused to attend lectures that he considered mundane, preferring to study those subjects on his own. He was a master

brag and table-tennis player, and spent many hours in the medical school sports hall honing his skills.

Ajay had a strong intuitive sense of ethics, and when the United Nations promulgated International Woman's Day to highlight the plight of women, Ajay wrote a letter to request that they also found an International Youth Day.

In 1990 he qualified as a general surgeon. With a special interest in diseases of the breast, he was a founding member and remained actively involved in the metropolitan breast oncology team in Durban. Such was his dedication to this team that he attended his last clinic the day before his sudden illness.

Known for his formidable intellect and irreverent sense of humour, Ajay was happiest in the company of his family and friends or immersed in a book, Sudoku or a crossword puzzle while listening to jazz. His love of golf was matched only by his passion for soccer, and he shared both with his son Amar and daughter Deeya. He and his wife Vasie also had a younger son named Arjun and an older daughter, Veena.

Described as a loving son, father and brother, with a heart of gold, Ajay was quite an adventurer. He hiked the peaks of the Drakensberg to train for his successful ascents of Mount Kilimanjaro and Machu Picchu. He had to abandon his Otter Trail trek on the penultimate day, when he dislocated his

kneecap while climbing a rocky precipice along the Southern Cape coast. Despite this, he stayed on to greet his fellow hikers at the Storms River mouth with a six-pack of Black Label beer to celebrate their accomplishment. Ajay also enjoyed regular fishing with the Medics Angling Club, resulting in many a tall fishing tale that will be told for years to come!

Fiercely loyal, infuriatingly resolute and abundantly generous, Ajay stepped to the beat of his own drum. He sought the truth at all costs and claimed no easy victories. The measure of his life lies in the simplicity, humility and nobility of spirit for which he will always be remembered. He was a vocal member of the KZN Specialist Network, where his incisive questions and challenges at our academic meetings and annual general meetings will be very much missed. He was ever prepared to criticise the board of directors, and never spared any advice or recommendations to make the KZNSN a better organisation.

Ajay will be sorely missed by all our members, by his colleagues, and by the staff he worked with at Ethekwini Hospital in Durban. His indomitable spirit will forever live on in our midst. Rest in peace, Ajay.

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