

OBITUARY

Oliver Raynham



Dr Oliver Raynham with patient Seth Gordon, about to go into theatre (photo by Sue Gordon).

Dr Oliver Raynham was killed in a boating accident in the early evening of 29 December 2016 at the age of 47. He was sailing his Hobie catamaran up the Klein River outside Stanford when its mast hit power lines crossing the river and he was electrocuted. On board with him were three 11-year-old boys, participants in the annual Hermanus Camp, where Oliver was volunteering as the camp doctor (as he had done for several years) and as a group leader. The boys escaped physically unharmed. They reported that just before the accident they had been sharing biscuits and enjoying the beauty of the evening, and Oliver's last words were about how grateful and blessed they were to share such a wonderful moment. The way he died was typical of him – always living life to the full, out on an adventure, and surrounded by young people, with whom he had a natural affinity.

Oliver was born on 28 June 1969 in Cape Town, the youngest of four children, his father a well-known surgeon in the city, and grew up in the Southern Suburbs. He attended Western Province Preparatory School, Westerford High School, Abbott's College and Rhodes University before being conscripted into the army, where he worked as a medic and was inspired to

study medicine. Gaining entry into medical school was not easy, but he was determined, and overcame many disappointments before his acceptance into Stellenbosch University. After being awarded his MB ChB he went to Brighton, UK, to study further, gaining Membership of the Royal College of Surgeons of England and the Diploma in Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgery. He then returned to Cape Town, joined the ENT Department at the University of Cape Town to specialise, and achieved his FCS (SA) (ORL) through the Colleges of Medicine of South Africa. During his specialist training circumstances led Oliver to work at Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital, and it would appear that this experience nurtured his love for and understanding of children and allowed him to develop a special interest in paediatric airway pathologies.

Once he had specialised, Oliver was posted to the ENT department at New Somerset Hospital in Green Point, which he ran for a number of years before committing himself to full-time private practice at the Life Vincent Pallotti Hospital. He had been running his popular practice for 6 years before his accident. Oliver kept his hand in the world of academic medicine; he continued to do sessions at Red Cross, which were funded by UCT, and these allowed him to achieve his potential as a teacher, both of UCT 5th-year medical students doing their ENT rotation and the registrars specialising in ENT through that facility. Oliver demonstrated clinical excellence and great patience in teaching, and enjoyed sharing his knowledge. Also of note was his genuine rapport with the young patients and their families – he had an enviable 'bedside manner'. A father of four, he had a relaxed and natural manner with children generally. He would frequently pick up a small nervous child and give them a hug and a smile that inevitably put them at ease, and parents were confident in his ability and grateful for the time he took to

explain clearly what was going on and the best way forward. A testament to this was the number of medical doctors who brought their children to be seen by him.

Among his professional colleagues, Oliver, with his light-hearted and gregarious nature, was always a pleasure to be around. He participated actively in the academic realms of the ENT profession in South Africa, and had recently presented at the national ENT congress as well as authoring a scientific paper he intended to publish. He also took on responsibility in the South African ENT society, had just been elected onto the management committee, and was earmarked to contribute significantly in fee negotiations on behalf of the society.

Oliver was a proud father and a loving, committed husband. He and Maria had four children, Joshua, 17, Thomas, 13, Peter, 9, and Sophie, 7. They spent many family holidays out camping, exploring nature; Oliver had a passion for outdoor life. He provided an excellent role model for his children and would gladly relate their successes to anyone who wanted to know. He sought balance and measure in his professional and family life in the form of a passion for mountain biking – some days he was awake in the early hours of the morning cycling on the slopes of Devil's Peak with his mates. He participated in many mountain biking challenges and had a regular group of friends with whom he enjoyed the camaraderie, the trials and tribulations, and the sheer humour associated with these events.

As husband, father, son, brother, doctor, friend and colleague, Oliver played his roles well. It has been said that it is not length of life that is important, but depth of life. Oliver jumped into life and never touched the bottom. He will be missed tremendously.

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