

OBITUARY

Orlando L Meyers, 25 December 1935 - 24 July 2021



Prof. Orlando L Meyers (fondly known as Lan to his friends) was born on a farm near Middelburg in the Eastern Cape. After his schooling at Pretoria Boys' High School, he went on to complete his medical training in 1958 at the University of Cape Town, where he graduated with the class gold medal and first-class honours. Postgraduate training in medicine in Cape Town was followed by immunology research related to arthritis at the London Hospital. He was awarded a research fellowship from Harvard University and studied cell-mediated immunity at the Robert Brigham Hospital in Boston from 1967 to 1969.

On returning to Cape Town, Lan was appointed head of the Immunology Laboratory and Arthritis Clinic at UCT Medical School and Groote Schuur Hospital, and played an active leadership role in undergraduate medical education. In 1976 he became the first professor of rheumatology in South Africa when he was appointed to the Isaac Albow Chair of Rheumatology. Close collaboration with the

Department of Orthopaedics at Princess Alice Orthopaedic Hospital contributed to its development as a centre of excellence in the care, rehabilitation, and surgical management of patients with bone and joint diseases.

The UCT/GSH rheumatology programme achieved an international reputation as a centre of excellence for the provision of clinical care and training in bone and joint diseases. As an exemplary physician, with remarkable clinical acumen and devotion to his work, Lan was an inspirational teacher and role model. He imparted his skills to generations of registrars. Fellows pursuing careers in rheumatology were stimulated by his mentorship to emulate his skills and dedication. During his illustrious career, he undertook pioneering research on the epidemiology of rheumatic diseases in the Northern and Eastern Cape regions and supervised many doctoral students, whose research documented the clinical spectrum and expression of various rheumatological diseases in South African populations.

Two of us (GMM and AAK), who benefited from his wisdom and guidance, continued his legacy which contributed to the growth of the specialty, with nearly 100 rheumatologists in South Africa today. In the words of Steven Spielberg, 'The delicate balance of mentoring someone is not creating them in your own image but giving them the opportunity to create themselves.'

Lan served on the Board of Trustees of the Arthritis Foundation from 1970 and as National Chairman from 1985 until 1997. During his leadership the Foundation flourished, and it continues to serve the community today. The rheumatology community has long recognised his foresight and contribution, and since 2003 the O L Meyers Guest Lecture has featured at

each biennial congress of the South African Rheumatism and Arthritis Association.

Following early retirement in 1995 at the age of 60, Lan entered private practice at Southern Cross Wynberg Hospital, travelling along the Garden Route once a month to consult in George and Knysna, as well as consulting in Port Elizabeth every third month. In 1998 he permanently relocated to Sedgefield and set up a practice in George. He yearned for the Karoo, and finally moved to Aberdeen in January 2008.

Lan was an exemplary physician/educator who touched the lives of many through his caring, empathy, and passion for ensuring the wellbeing of his patients. His relationships with his patients were encapsulated in the words of Sir William Osler, 'The good physician treats the disease; the great physician treats the patient who has the disease.'

His pioneering contributions and legacy in rheumatology will long be remembered with respect and admiration.

He is survived by Mike, his ex-wife Meg, his son Paul and daughter Clare, their spouses and four grandchildren.

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