

OBITUARY

Joseph (Ozzie) Ozinsky



Dr Joseph Ozinsky, doyen of cardiac anaesthesiologists in South Africa and mentor to generations of anaesthetic trainees in the University of Cape Town Department of Anaesthesia, passed away in Cape Town on 15 August 2017 at the age of 90.

Born of Polish parents in 1927, he was educated as a Queen Victoria Scholar at SACS, where he matriculated at age 15. He then studied medicine as a SACS Memorial Scholar at UCT, graduating MB ChB in 1949. He trained in anaesthesia at Groote Schuur Hospital in Cape Town and King Edward

VII Hospital in Durban. In 1955 he travelled to the UK, where he worked as a registrar at Barnet General Hospital in London and passed both the DA (RCP&S) and the DA (Ire). He returned to Cape Town to the newly opened Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital and then to Groote Schuur Hospital, where he progressed from specialist to chief specialist in the Department of Anaesthesia. In 1990 UCT honoured him by making him an associate professor.

Oz was in charge of cardiothoracic anaesthesia at Groote Schuur for over 40 years and is probably best known for being the lead anaesthetist in Christiaan Barnard's heart transplant team. His unflappable temperament and dry sense of humour enabled him to control prima donna surgeons and defuse tense situations. He was also able to 'defend his space' on the anaesthetist's side of the 'blood-brain' barrier, as many visiting surgeons discovered.

During an academic meeting in 1977 he suffered the first of several strokes that were to plague him in later life, and woke with temporary aphasia and a hemiparesis. This led to Prof. Bull penning the following:

*He died not in church
He died not in Shul
He died whilst listening
To Professor Bull.*

To which Oz replied:

*He listened with patience
He listened in pain
To things he had heard
Again and again.
Then sleep overcame him
Completely besotted
He relaxed his neck
And kinked his carotid.*

Oz was appointed head of clinical services in the UCT Department of Anaesthesia and administered the day-to-day running of the department for many years. One of his lasting legacies was the advisory role he played in the layout of theatres, and the purchase of 'state-of-the-art' theatre equipment, in the move to the new Groote Schuur Hospital in 1989.

Oz retired in 1992, but continued his interest in cardiothoracic anaesthesia in the department until the end of December 2001. His wife Maria ('Poppy', née Rautenbach) passed away in 2011. He is survived by his sons Max and Adrian, and their families.

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