

## Mike Kew: A physician-scientist, teacher and role model extraordinaire with an enduring influence on excellence and mentorship in medicine

*But a role model in the flesh provides more than inspiration; his or her very existence is confirmation of possibilities one may have every reason to doubt... (Sonia Sotomayor)*

Rarely is a physician able to make a profound influence in his field that has a lasting impact on clinical practice, medical education, academic discourse, the lives of students and patients, and medical leadership, though many may succeed in one or a few of these arenas. Michael Charles Kew belongs to that rare breed of physician-scientists who epitomise consummate excellence, and he has had an indelible influence in his chosen field of hepatology, both in this country and abroad. Through his work and his life, Mike Kew has provided inspiration in abundance, and continuously confirmed possibilities that many would have doubted.

Mike qualified in medicine at the University of the Witwatersrand in 1956, graduating *cum honoris primus*, and embarking on what would be a brilliant medical and research career. He obtained his Fellowship of the College of Physicians of South Africa in 1965. He was awarded a Doctor of Medicine degree in 1968, a PhD in 1974 and a Doctor of Science degree in 1982, all from the University of the Witwatersrand. Except for brief stints as a Wellcome Trust Research Fellow in the Liver Unit at the Royal Free Hospital, London, UK, and as a Fogarty Visiting Scientist in the Hepatitis Viruses Section, National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, USA, Mike worked his entire professional life as a physician, hepatologist and professor of medicine at the Johannesburg Academic Hospital Complex and the University of the Witwatersrand, until his retirement at the age of 68 years. It was after his retirement that he continued his academic career as an honorary professor of medicine at the University of Cape Town, with sustained academic outputs.

It was during this twilight phase of his career in Cape Town that I first met Mike, and knew him as a gentle, thoughtful and humble academic giant. Following a lifetime of dedicated investigation and study, his comprehensive contributions to the understanding of the epidemiology, biology and mechanisms of hepatocellular cancer are legendary and unparalleled. To date, nobody has published more on viral hepatitis and hepatocellular carcinoma among Africans. Mike and colleagues were amongst the first to describe the close association of chronic hepatitis B infection with hepatocellular carcinoma, the

integration of viral DNA into the tumour cells, and the significant contributions of age, sex, aflatoxin and iron in the clinical phenotype and progression of hepatocellular carcinoma. Through his work, he firmly ensconced himself as an authority and opinion leader on this aggressive form of cancer. For years, he was an advocate for policy interventions focusing on prevention, early detection and treatment of hepatocellular carcinoma in this country.

In Cape Town, Mike was fully integrated into the Liver Clinic, making many important contributions to teaching, training and scholarship. He continued to be prolific in his outputs and built a broad base of collaborations. At all times, his work was conducted with a sincerity, humility and integrity that were supreme.

While his influence as a great physician-scientist, teacher and role model is unquestionable, Mike's enduring contribution will be the role he has played as mentor to countless generations of medical students, physicians and hepatologists, many of whom have gone on to lead their discipline in this country and abroad. For a teacher, there can be no greater honour than the heritage he leaves behind. Without exception, every former student regards Mike with awe, admiration and gratitude. Through his teaching and example, Mike has built a rich medical heritage, and by so doing ensured a bright future for hepatology in this country.

It is an honour to contribute to this festschrift to honour a man who has dedicated his entire professional life to the pursuit of excellence. Mike has excelled as an academic, a teacher, a clinician and an advocate in his discipline. At all times, he led by example. Mike, I salute and congratulate you on a professional life that has been exemplary and exceptionally well lived.

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