

OBITUARIES

Peter Jacobs



Dr Peter Jacobs was a pioneer of clinical and laboratory haematology in South Africa (SA). Although much of his career coincided with years of apartheid-related isolation, his enormous influence was felt internationally. He led the Department of Haematology at the University of Cape Town and later served as head of Clinical Haematology at Stellenbosch University. In the early 1970s, at a time when Cape Town was central to the field of organ transplantation, Jacobs' major achievement was the introduction of experimental and clinical bone marrow transplantation (BMT). He published the seminal report of hepatic veno-occlusive disease after BMT in the *SAMJ*.^[1] With colleagues at Cambridge University he developed techniques to reduce graft-versus-host disease through *ex vivo* application of the monoclonal antibody Campath 1G. He was also instrumental in the establishment of the South African Bone Marrow Registry. In recognition of his outstanding academic accomplishments, he was awarded the centenary medal by the South African Academy of Arts and Science in 2009.

Throughout his career, Jacobs trained and mentored countless medical students, nurses, laboratory technicians, graduate physicians and basic scientists. In the midst of political

and economic instability in SA, many of his trainees left the country to develop their academic careers worldwide. Jacobs remained in SA and continued to practise academic medicine with a tireless, systematic and inquisitive approach. His longstanding interest in lymphoma was influenced in recent years by the region's HIV epidemic. Jacobs' biennial South African Lymphoma Study Group conferences, initiated in 1982, were regularly attended by local and visiting lymphoma experts of international repute. The fifteenth of such meetings was held in 2012, where Jacobs' closing remark was to eagerly invite the attendees to return to Cape Town in 2014. Despite his absence, they will very likely do so.

Matthew Seftel

*Associate Professor, Division of Medical Oncology and Hematology, Department of Medicine, University of Toronto, Canada
matthew.seftel@uhn.ca*

1. Jacobs P, Miller JL, Uys CJ, Dietrich BE. Fatal veno-occlusive disease of the liver after chemotherapy, whole-body irradiation and bone marrow transplantation for refractory acute leukaemia. *S Afr Med J* 1979 Jan 6;55(1):5-10.