

OBITUARY



Lorna Macdougall, 1924 - 2014

Prof. Lorna Macdougall was one of the pioneers in paediatric oncology/haematology in Johannesburg and South Africa and a founder of CHOC (Children's Haematology and Oncology Clinics), an NGO to support the families and children with cancer that has blossomed from being a local Johannesburg organisation to a national one over the years.

Born into a medical family in Glasgow, Scotland, her mother being one of the first female psychiatrists in that country, Lorna trained in medicine in Glasgow before spending some time as a medical officer in Kenya.

I have no doubt that her experiences there were responsible for her yearning to return to Africa after training as a paediatric haematologist in the USA and managing a haematological laboratory in Buffalo, NY.

Prof. John Hansen, then head of paediatrics at the University of the Witwatersrand, enticed Lorna to join the Department of Paediatrics at Baragwanath Hospital (now Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital) in 1975, where she participated in the research activities of the newly formed Metabolic and Nutrition Research Unit and slowly developed what was to become the largest paediatric oncology unit in South Africa. It was during this period that I came to know Lorna well, as we had offices opposite each other and would often spend the late afternoons talking about our patients and the issues of the day. Lorna was committed to ensuring that children with cancer or haematological disease from Soweto, and the many referred from neighbouring provinces and countries, received optimal care and support, particularly during the years of apartheid healthcare. Although her first love was paediatric haematology and she had published quite extensively on the immune changes in iron deficiency, she realised on arriving in Johannesburg that a major problem facing children with cancer was the lack of a dedicated team of appropriately trained paediatric oncologists and the facilities to care for these children. As a result of her enthusiasm and persistence, Goldfields SA

funded the first of a number of renovations to develop the paediatric oncology wards at Baragwanath Hospital, much to the envy of the other paediatric subspecialties.

During Lorna's years as head of paediatric oncology/haematology at Baragwanath she was responsible for training a number of paediatric oncologists, who have become well known in various parts of the world or stayed in South Africa to continue the legacy she left on her retirement in 1989. I am sure that the thriving and well-staffed paediatric oncology unit created through her drive and personality is the envy of many in Africa.

It is perhaps one of the ironies of life that Lorna spent much of her spare time doing calligraphy, glass engraving and miniature painting, yet was to be frustrated by failing eyesight and hearing in the last few years of her life.

I believe that I can speak on behalf of all healthcare professionals who came into contact with Lorna, and say that oncology in Johannesburg and the children of Soweto are the poorer for her passing. We offer our condolences to her family overseas.

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