



FACULTY News



JANUARY 2008 | FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES | UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

Valedictory Lecture by Solly Benatar

Continuing a tradition started a few years ago, the Faculty has invited one of its distinguished retirees to deliver a valedictory lecture. We are delighted that Professor Solly Benatar has agreed to give this lecture next month:

Date: 13 February 2008

Time: 17h15

Venue: Student Learning Centre, Anatomy Building, Faculty of Health Sciences

Title: South Africa as a Laboratory for Understanding Challenges to Global Health

Solomon Robert Benatar graduated with his MBChB degree from UCT in 1965, followed by specialisations, first in anaesthetics and then in internal medicine in Cape Town and London. He served as Professor and Head of the Department of Medicine at UCT and Groote Schuur Hospital, positions he held with great distinction from 1980 until 1999. As highlighted on page 2 of this newsletter, he finished his career off on a high note last year, earning the degree of DSc (Med).

40th Anniversary of First Heart Transplant

On 3 December we celebrated the 40th anniversary of the world's first heart transplant, performed by Dr Christiaan Neethling Barnard and his team at Groote Schuur Hospital. That event back in 1967 focused international attention on Cape Town and led directly to the recognition that South Africans were capable of conducting world-class research in medical science.

To recognize the occasion Professor Peter Zilla, the Chris Barnard Chair in Cardiovascular Surgery, organized an academic seminar on the afternoon of 3 December. After a word of welcome was extended by the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Njabulo Ndebele, the large audience was then treated to three outstanding lectures.



Professors Peter Zilla, Solly Benatar, Marian Jacobs and Johan Brink

Associate Professor Johan Brink, head of the cardiac transplant unit, spoke about the first heart transplant and then described some of the future challenges for heart surgery in Africa. During his presentation he introduced two cardiac transplant patients: a woman who had received her new heart 25 years ago (before Johan had trained as a surgeon), and a man who had travelled from Ireland especially for the day's celebrations.

Our Dean, Professor Marian Jacobs, spoke about the future of children in Africa, with special emphasis on the growing burden of cardiac disease, and Professor Solly Benatar rounded off the seminar with an uplifting presentation on sustaining excellence into the future.

Another event that day was the opening of the Heart of Cape Town Museum, located in the original operating theatres in the old Groote Schuur. It pays tribute to the life of Chris Barnard, documenting the first heart transplant with realistic displays. A gala dinner, attended by the National Minister of Health, Dr Manto Tshabalala-Msimang & the Premier of the Western Cape, Ebrahim Rasool, rounded off a successful day.

IIDMM Students Excel

Six students from the IIDMM were recently selected to attend the 2nd African Workshop on Detection of Antigen-Specific T Cells by Intracellular Cytokine Staining, held at the National Institute of Communicable Diseases (NICD) in Johannesburg.



Back row: Tom Scriba, Ben Kagina, Pam Gumbi, Pri-nola Naicker, Wendy Burgers; Front row: Kerryn van Veen, Hannah Gideon, and Gwen Tena-Coki.

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DEAN'S CORNER

Last year passed by in a flash and we start the year on a positive note – in a healthy financial state, and our reputation for excellence in health service, research and teaching intact. To all who contributed to stability and success in 2007, my sincere appreciation.

The Faculty also welcomes Dr Reno Morar as dean's advisor: health services. Dr Morar is a public health specialist physician with post-graduate qualifications in health management and financing and executive coaching. He also has extensive experience which make him eminently suitable for this job: in health service management, as a medical superintendent at Groote Schuur; as director of health services for the clothing industry; and of service in local,

provincial and national government policy and programme-related structures. He will be a huge asset to the Faculty leadership, and we look forward to having him in the dean team.

The past few years have been characterised by reaction to external pressures and crises, but the time has now come to anticipate, and to be proactive through addressing a few big questions in our planning this year: How should we respond to the needs of the region, country, continent – what do we mean by identifying ourselves as an "African University" and how do we position ourselves internationally? And how can we balance service, teaching and research in this process? What is the optimal shape, size, structure and space for the Faculty, and are we ap-

propriately resourced for this purpose? How can we improve relations and communication with one another, and also with our external partners to meet objectives? How can we become more inclusive, supportive and sensitive to diversity and ensure a positive experience for both students and staff? And how should we plan for strengthening individual and institutional capacity to address all these issues?

Big questions, indeed, but the dean team has made a strong New Year's resolution to put in place a process to address them in this year. As you make your own resolutions, I wish you the strength to follow through on yours, and ask you to help keep us both focused and accountable for ours. Happy New Year!

Publication of the Month

The 24 December 2007 issue of *Time Magazine* published a list of its "Top 10 Scientific Discoveries in 2007". Coming in at position number eight was a paper co-authored by Alan Morris of Human Biology:

Grine FE, Bailey RM, Harvati K, Nathan RP, Morris AG, Henderson GM, Ribot I, Pike AW, "Late Pleistocene human skull from Hofmeyr, South Africa, and modern human origins", *Science*, 315(5809): 226-229, 2007.

The specific citation from *Time* reads, "Early this year, an international team of scientists

announced that analysis of a skull discovered in South Africa in 1952 revealed the first fossil evidence that modern humans left Africa between 65,000 and 25,000 years ago. Scientists determined the age of the skull, unearthed near Hofmeyr, South Africa, by testing the levels of radiation in sand that had filled the braincase. They figured it was 36,000 years old & matched skulls found in Europe, eastern Asia and Australia, in age and appearance, which supports the theory that modern man originated in sub-Saharan Africa and fanned out from there."



Writers' Workshop

The School of Public Health and Family Medicine held a workshop at the end of 2007 in the spectacular surroundings of Mont Fleur, in the mountains near Stellenbosch (see below).

Organised by Andrea Rother and facilitated by Jennifer Jelsma, these workshops have the unambiguous aim of encouraging publication.

If you would like to arrange a workshop for your own department, please make contact with the Research Office at 650 5109 or Lyn.Holness@uct.ac.za.



Monthly Quiz

While most of the focus at Polokwane was on the leadership contest between Thabo Mbeki and Jacob Zuma, the ANC also elected 80 members to the National Executive Committee (NEC). How many of these 80 are medical doctors, what are their names, and where did they qualify? Send your answers to: kit.vaughan@uct.ac.za

Answer to last month's quiz: 3 December 1967 was a Sunday and the three other surgeons assisting Chris Barnard were: his brother Marius Barnard, Rodney Hewitson and Terry O'Donovan. Morea Petersen was the winner: this was her third correct answer for 2007, so her perseverance finally paid off. Congratulations Morea!

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Selection was abstract-driven and highly competitive, and the students spent a week receiving teaching on advanced topics in flow cytometry. The focus was on measuring immune responses using more than four markers or colours (multiparameter flow cytometry) as well as new analysis tools, in a hands-on approach which included presentation of their current research projects and improvements they would make based on what they had learnt in the workshop.

IIDMM students scooped up the two prizes for the top performers at the workshop. Gwen Tena-Coki, a first year PhD student, was awarded a scholarship to attend the MASIR Congress in La Plagne, France in January 2008. Prinola Naicker, a first year MSc student, was awarded a scholarship to attend the Uganda Immunology Conference in November 2008. MSc student Kerryn van Veen and PhD student Pam Gumbi received special merit awards for excellent performance. PhD students Hannah Gideon and Ben Kagina were also selected and participated in the workshop. Dr Wendy Burgers and Dr Tom Scriba of the IIDMM were part of the organizing and teaching faculty that facilitated the workshop.

[Wendy Burgers]

Doctoral Degrees Awarded

An impressive 17 doctoral degrees were awarded on 10 December 2007: 14 for the PhD degree, 1 MD and two DSc (Med) degrees.

The degree of Doctor of Science in Medicine is the most senior doctorate in the Faculty of Health Sciences and is awarded for substantial, original and scholarly contributions to knowledge in one or more medical fields. It is awarded rarely, and only to persons of exceptional academic merit, on the basis of original published work, which must be of international standing and regarded as seminal. The two recipients of the DSc (Med) degrees in 2007 were Professors Solomon Benatar and Wulf Utian.

Professor Benatar's research has evolved along a clear path, moving from examining questions of respiratory health (particularly in the research of asthma and tuberculosis) to ones of how health care services are organised and structured, to medical ethics in the clinic, to questions of global health, and finally, to much broader questions of social justice and global responsi-

bilities in health and in research. His written scholarship covers fields ranging from respiratory medicine, academic freedom, medical ethics and the humanities in medicine, to human rights, health care systems, medical education, health economics and global health. All-in-all he has published some 189 journal articles in internationally recognised peer-reviewed journals, 41 book chapters and over 100 other scholarly articles.

His scholarship and intellectual analyses have made a major contribution to the improvement of healthcare and medical education in South Africa, while his bold and courageous examination of difficult questions has advanced and influenced the evolution of thinking in several fields of scholarship. For these accomplishments, Professor Benatar was awarded the degree of DSc (Med) in Health, Ethics and Society.



Celebrating their doctoral degrees are: Merle Futter, Tamara Hew-Butler, Jacqui Friedling, Amaal Abrahams, Mark Hatherill, Susan Cleary, Kit Vaughan (Deputy Dean, Postgraduate Affairs) and Solly Benatar

Professor Wulf Utian (below) has been a pioneer in women's health issues and an innovator in several aspects of advanced reproductive technology. One of the early innovators of infertility microsurgery in the USA, he also developed one of the world's first successful *in vitro* fertilisation centres. The primary focus of his research has been to determine the nature of

menopause and its optimal management in order to enhance the overall quality of life for women.

For these accomplishments, Professor Utian was awarded the degree of DSc (Med) in Obstetrics and Gynaecology.

