



### Prof Hannes M. Meyer (1933 - 2020)

Hannes Meyer was born in Rustenburg in May 1933. He was the school captain of Oudtshoorn Boys High where he matriculated in 1951. He studied medicine at the University of Pretoria and after an internship in Baberton, practiced as a family physician in Stella from 1959 - 1965.

He commenced his surgical training in Pretoria, and then joined the University of Cape Town programme under Chris Barnard at the end of 1967, in time to experience the first heart transplant. He also assisted at the well-known Philip Blaiberg transplant, who became one of the longest survivors of the initial transplant programmes. He was also involved in the first heart-lung and heterotopic heart transplants.

After qualifying as a cardiothoracic surgeon in 1971, he was invited to start a cardiothoracic surgery programme at the new Medical School at the University of the Free State (UFS) in Bloemfontein, partnering with Prof PHT (Piet) Kleynhans as cardiologist.

Under Professor Meyer, the unit became a leading institution in South Africa in the fields of coronary artery revascularisation and myocardial protection. He established an active research division, headed by Professor Leon Neethling, directed at anti-mineralisation techniques in biological tissue, early tissue engineering, heart valve development, myocardial protection and the development and establishment of a homograft bank. The homograft bank was the biggest of its kind in South Africa during the late 1990s. Numerous publications in peer review medical journals and many international conference presentations resulted from the research.

This research programme was expanded after 2004 and resulted in the establishment of the Robert W.M. Frater Centre for Cardiovascular Research in 2015. The centre still conducts research in the homografts, tissue engineering and heart valve development, amongst other activities, as a direct result of his efforts.

A paediatric cardiac surgery programme was developed under his leadership and can be largely contributed to Professor Japie Hough, whom he unequivocally supported. He also expanded homograft use and initiated a mitral valve repair programme. He retired in 1991 after leading the department for 20 years.

As a tribute to his commitment to training, the Annual Hannes Meyer Registrar Symposium has been presented by or at the UFS since 2004. This symposium hosts delegates from all training

centres in South Africa and has had delegates from up to 9 other African countries. He has maintained an active interest in these activities.

He will always be remembered for his keen interest in research, meticulous surgery, his insistence of excellent patient care and his integrity in all matters.

He was a committed husband to Wilna, the love of his life, who sadly passed away before him, and a dedicated father and grandfather.

He was part of the glory period of cardiothoracic surgery in South Africa and lives on in the lives and memory of his many trainees and their trainees.

We salute you.

**Dr Robbie Kleinloog**

President: Society for Cardiothoracic Surgeons of South Africa

**Prof Francis E. Smit**

Director of the Robert W.M. Frater Centre for Cardiovascular Research and Head of Cardiothoracic Surgery, University of the Free State

**Prof W.M.L. (Leon) Neethling**

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