

# OBITUARY

Edgar Swart, 9 November 1932 - 16 June 2019



The dermatology fraternity of South Africa has lost one of its much-loved and most passionate members. Dr Edgar Swart passed away after a short illness, while still in private practice at the age of 86. Such was his dedication to dermatology and to his patients that he even wrote prescriptions on his deathbed.

Edgar grew up in the Cape Town suburb of Goodwood under difficult circumstances, his father having passed away before he started school. He matriculated in December 1950 at Epping High School and studied medicine at the University of Cape Town with financial aid from the Dutch Reformed Church. He remained a devout Christian throughout his life, teaching children at Sunday School, serving on his church's council, and requesting changes in the

dates of meetings so that they did not clash with his 'biduur' (prayer meeting). After completing his MB ChB degree in 1957 and his internship at Karl Bremer Hospital in 1958, he worked as a medical missionary at Nkhoma in Malawi from 1959 to 1963, returning to Karl Bremer, the University of Stellenbosch's teaching hospital, to specialise in dermatology thereafter. He completed his MMed (Derm) and then spent a year as a registrar at St Thomas's Hospital in London (1968 - 1969).

He started private practice in Bellville in 1969 and also consulted in Cape Town's City Bowl, spending half a century serving his patients. While in practice, he also served as head of the Dermatology Division at Stellenbosch University, from 1972 to 1989. His thesis entitled 'Anticonvulsives and sebaceous gland function' earned him an MD from the University in 1989. His devotion to teaching is reflected in his continuing as a part-time sessional consultant until the retirement age of 65 (1997), and his devotion to learning in the fact that he was a regular attendee at the Division's weekly journal club meeting and the monthly Stellenbosch University/ University of Cape Town dermatology interdepartmental meeting, as well as the monthly Western Cape private practitioner's journal meeting, which he was instrumental in founding. He penned several publications in peer-reviewed journals and, with Prof. Teo Heyl, wrote a textbook titled *Dermatologie vir Suider-Afrika* (Dermatology for Southern Africa), published by Butterworth in 1990.

Edgar served on the executive committee of the Dermatology Society of South Africa for several years and received its prestigious service award. He prepared many dermatologists for their board examinations and acted as an external examiner for many of those currently practising.

Edgar married Gwen van Schalkwyk in 1958 and, at the time of his death, had four children, seven grandchildren and one great-grandchild. He was a devoted father and grandfather and spent quality time sharing and teaching his family members about his passions, hobbies and sports, which included cattle farming, bee keeping, aloes, angling, rugby and cricket. He had been respected as a formidable rugby prop while at the University of Cape Town.

Edgar's funeral, attended by numerous family members, friends and colleagues, was testimony to his positive influence on so many. He was a great raconteur with a keen sense of humour – his stock phrase before starting an outpatient session was '*kom ons gaan red velle*' (let's go and save skins). He will be deeply missed and fondly remembered as a doyen of dermatology, a monumental mentor, a passionate pater familias, and above all, a committed Christian.

## Jonathan Smith

President, Dermatology Society of South Africa, Cape Town, South Africa

## Henry F Jordaan

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