

Professor Sidney Cywes Obituary:



We are tremendously saddened to announce that doyen of paediatric surgery in South Africa Professor Sidney Cywes has passed away on 6 April 2020 following a short illness.

Professor Sidney Cywes was a pioneer, mentor, strategist and a master surgeon, who worked at the Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital in Cape Town throughout his career.

Born on 1 January 1931 in Paarl in the Western Cape, South Africa, he graduated from the University of Cape Town (UCT) with an MBChB in 1953. He became a lecturer in Surgery (UCT) in 1961, when he commenced working at Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital. He was the first surgeon in South Africa to restrict his practice entirely to Paediatric Surgery. In 1975 he was appointed as the first incumbent of the Charles FM Saint Chair of Paediatric Surgery, a position which he held until his retirement in 1996.

During his outstanding career, Professor Cywes became involved in and played a leadership role in many professional societies and organisations. He was the Past President of the World Federation of Associations of Paediatric Surgeons (WOFAPS, Founding Member and President of the South African Association of Paediatric Surgeons, Honorary Life Member of the British Association of Paediatric Surgeons, and was instrumental in establishing the Pan African Association of Paediatric Surgeons.

Professor Cywes was held in esteem by colleagues locally and globally. A Fellow of the University of Cape Town, was also awarded the following Honorary Fellowships and Memberships: of the American College of Surgeons, the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, the Royal College of Surgeons of England, the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow and the American Academy of Paediatrics.

He published numerous articles in peer review journals, authored many textbook chapters and edited several books on paediatric surgical subjects. He had a special interest in management of complex paediatric surgical conditions, which included separation of conjoined twins, ano-rectal malformations, Hirschsprung's Disease, surgical oncology, oesophageal replacement surgery and solid organ

transplantation.

“Professor Sidney Cywes was a true visionary, and the children of South Africa have much to thank him for,” says Prof Alp Numanoglu, from the Division of Paediatric Surgery.

Observing the large and growing toll of child injury deaths, the progressive nature of childhood injuries and the frequently long-lasting effects of injury on children, he was the driving force behind the creation of the Child Accident Prevention Foundation of Southern Africa (CAPFSA) in 1978 and the subsequent establishment at the Red Cross War Memorial Children’s Hospital of the Child Safety Centre, which is now the home of ChildSafe CAPFSA’s new name. It is a remarkable feat that ChildSafe South Africa recently celebrated its 40th Anniversary.

“It is impossible to mention all the developments at Red Cross War Memorial Children’s Hospital that resulted through this vision. The great impact of his strategic thinking led to development of the Neonatal Surgery Unit (1976), a Day Surgery Service from 1976 with its own Centre (1989), a dedicated Trauma Unit (1984), the Surgical Intensive Care Unit (1985), and a Liver Transplantation Programme (1987),” says Professor Numanoglu.

He was, with Professor Dave Beatty, a founding member of the Children’s Hospital Trust in 1994, which has done so much to maintain the Children’s Hospital at the forefront of Paediatric Surgical Practice.

He has also been a role model to many Paediatric Surgeons from South Africa and from all over the world, who came to the Red Cross War Memorial Children’s Hospital as Fellows to learn. He particularly pioneered contacts throughout Africa. Many then went on to occupy Chairs of Paediatric Surgery in their own countries. He will be greatly missed by his colleagues, friends and the many patients that he treated with whom he maintained close contact into adulthood.

In addition to all this he developed an interest in horticulture from early on in his career. With his wife Marlene, he became one of South Africa’s leading horticulturists, winning competitions in Dahlias, Roses, Orchids and Disas. With the latter, they created new varieties which Professor Cywes dedicated to the cause of children’s surgery.

Our immediate thoughts and prayers are with his wife Marlene, children Robert and Colette and their families, and the Division of Paediatric Surgery, University of Cape Town and Red Cross War Memorial Children’s Hospital.

Alp Numanoglu – Ernesto Leva