

DR LEONIE SCHOEMAN

09.04.1962 - 17.06.2022



It was with great sadness that the George medical fraternity learnt of the passing of Dr Leonie Schoeman on the 17th of June 2022. She had battled colon cancer for two years with the same courage and fortitude it took her to become the loved and respected paediatric and general surgeon she was. Entering a very male dominated surgical profession in the late 1980's Leonie was an example to the many young women who now practice our profession.

Born in Piet Retief in 1962 she matriculated at the Eldoraigh high school in 1979 and started her medical studies at the University of Pretoria in 1980 completing her MBChB(with a distinction in surgery) in 1986.

In 1986 she did her internship at Tygerberg Hospital where our paths first crossed and where she met Frederik her husband to be. It was also where her love for surgery and trauma surgery in particular was stimulated working in various trauma units until she started her registrarship at Groote Schuur and the Red Cross Children's Hospital in 1988. In April of that year, she and Frederik were married.

In 1991 they moved to Gauteng where Leonie completed her registrarship working at the then Johannesburg and Baragwanath hospitals and completing her studies at the university of the Witwatersrand attaining her FCS in 1995. In 1996 whilst working as a consultant in general and paediatric surgery she was awarded the Michael and

Janie Miller Foundation Fellowship and in 1997 she worked as the visiting specialist registrar at the Great Ormond Street Hospital for children in London returning to work at Baragwanath hospital as a consultant paediatric surgeon from 1998-2001.

The family which now included two daughters Marie-Annette and Emma moved to George in 2001 where Leonie's association with trauma and emergency surgery was rekindled. From 2002-2009 she was head of the George Medi-clinics Trauma and Emergency centre. At the end of 2004 she spent three months as a locum consultant at the accident and emergency unit of the Royal Lancaster Infirmary in Lancaster UK.

During most of this time she had a part time private practice and did all the paediatric surgery in George. She also had a part time session at the George Provincial Hospital. Never one to shirk the teaching

aspect of her calling she regularly sacrificed family time to facilitate ATLS courses throughout the country.

In 2009 she started a very successful full time private practice, successful not only because of her surgical skills but because of the wonderful way in which she treated her patients both old and young. She was respected by her colleagues for her moral standards and work ethics and was always available to assist with problem cases. Despite her easy way with people, Leonie was a rather introverted person who would rather spend time with her family, close friends, or with a glass of wine and a good book.

I was privileged to have known Leonie for many years and even in the process of dying, over a glass of wine she taught me an important life lesson. "We don't fight cancer or death because of the fear of dying, we fight so we have more time with those we love".

Rest in peace good friend and esteemed colleague.

Ps. In doing some research for a eulogy at Leonie's funeral I found a modern version of the Hippocratic oath which said everything about my friend Leonie, and this may be an appropriate time to remind our young doctors of the standards Leonie lived and practice by and reflect on their own motives and practices as a tribute to her. - Dr M R Sunshine

A Modern Version of the Hippocratic Oath

- I swear to fulfill, to the best of my ability and judgment, this covenant:
 - I will respect the hard-won scientific gains of those physicians in whose steps I walk, and gladly share such knowledge as is mine with those who are to follow.
 - I will apply, for the benefit of the sick, all measures which are required, avoiding those twin traps of overtreatment and therapeutic nihilism.
 - I will remember that there is art to medicine as well as science, and that warmth, sympathy, and understanding may outweigh the surgeon's knife or the chemist's drug.
 - I will not be ashamed to say "I know not," nor will I fail to call in my colleagues when the skills of another are needed for a patient's recovery.
 - I will respect the privacy of my patients, for their problems are not disclosed to me that the world may know. Most especially must I tread with care in matters of life and death. If it is given me to save a life, all thanks. But it may also be within my power to ^{lose} ~~take~~ a life; this awesome responsibility must be faced with great humbleness and awareness of my own frailty. Above all, I must not play at God.
 - I will remember that I do not treat a fever chart, a cancerous growth, but a sick human being, whose illness may affect the person's family and economic stability. My responsibility includes these related problems, if I am to care adequately for the sick.
 - I will prevent disease whenever I can, for prevention is preferable to cure.
 - I will remember that I remain a member of society, with special obligations to all my fellow human beings, those sound of mind and body as well as the infirm.
- If I do not violate this oath, may I enjoy life and art, respected while I live and remembered with affection thereafter. May I always act so as to preserve the finest traditions of my calling and may I long experience the joy of healing those who seek my help.