



went on to careers in teaching, one was appointed to the Bench in Natal at the time of the freedom struggle negotiations in South Africa with Nelson Mandela, another founded and became chief executive of a bank, and at least 4 of his matriculation class entered medical school.

Given the the racial divide restrictions in South Africa, Mahomed Ismail entered the South African Native College at Fort Hare, completing a BSc degree in hygiene. He qualified MB BCh at the University of the Witwatersrand Medical School in 1951. He achieved top marks in forensic medicine in his 4th year at medical school, but chose to enter family medicine.

For his internship Dr Ismail went to a mission hospital in Swaziland as non-white doctors could not even do their internship training in so-called non-European hospitals in South Africa as it would have been degrading for white nursing staff in charge of hospital wards to receive orders from non-white doctors.

He practised in Pretoria for the next 55 years in the non-European part of the city where the so-called Asiatic Bazaar met with Marabastad, the traditional high-density 'location' of working-class blacks. The communities he served came to rely on him and to trust his clinical judgement and care.

In 1959 he undertook postgraduate study in internal medicine at Hammersmith Hospital and the Royal Post-graduate Medical School in London. Returning to South Africa he founded the Pretoria Medical Discussion Group (PMDG) with colleagues working in the predominantly non-white communities of Pretoria. As chairman of the PMDG he was active in organising continuing medical education, workshops and conferences. He served on the Advisory Council of the University of Durban/Westville that catered exclusively for Indian South Africans as part of Grand Apartheid, between 1968 and 1974. He was chairman of the Faculty of General Practice of the Colleges of Medicine of South Africa between 1975 and 1980, during which time he was appointed part-time superintendent of Laudium Hospital that served the Indian ghetto in Pretoria. Mahomed Ismail was appointed chairman of the Academy of Family Practice, Northern Transvaal Council, he was an elected Federal Council member, and in 1988 President of the Gauteng North Branch of the South African Medical Association, remaining a member of branch council until his death.

Dr Ismail endeared himself to his patients, always remaining accessible. Even though he had a busy practice, he managed to make house calls. He avidly pursued continuing medical education and shared his enthusiasm with his colleagues who came to respect him for his organisational skills. The biggest testimony to his life and work was his role in the early 1960s as founding member and chairman of the James Harrisson Dewrance Memorial Fund for tertiary education bursaries for deserving students. Because of the race laws that precluded attendance by non-white doctors at

lectures given at the University of Pretoria Medical School, Dr Ismail hosted lectures at his home, the sessions usually ending with everyone singing in chorus, 'Old man river'.

Born and raised in the culture of the Rajput Memon Sunni community, his interest in faith extended beyond Islam and he was familiar with the philosophies of Hinduism, Judaism and traditional African beliefs. His wife, Fatima, daughters Tahera, Sharifa and Shaakera, and sons Firhaad, Siddique and Zaheer, survive him. Dr Shaakera Ismail and her husband, Dr Sheraaz Ganchi, were in practice with him and continue in the same practice. Firhaad is an endocrinologist in Las Vegas, USA, Siddique is a cardiologist in Cape Town, and Zaheer is a general practitioner in Pretoria.

He was awarded a double gold medal in 2003 in recognition of his achievements with regard to the PMDG and outstanding contribution to continuing medical education. His greatest reward was the warm friendship and the regard he gave and received in his everyday work in his practice.

He passed away peacefully on 9 May 2007 surrounded by his family and friends. May his soul rest in peace.

**Professor Krishna Somers**

## Eric Lemmer

Eric Lemmer, a US citizen by birth, grew up and received his schooling and university education in South Africa. He graduated from the University of the Witwatersrand (MB BCh, *cum laude*) in Johannesburg in 1984. His interactions as a medical student with Michael Kew – a pioneer in research on the association hepatitis B virus (HBV) infection and hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC) – sparked a lifelong interest in the study of liver cancer. Eric moved to UCT where, after completing his registrar training in internal medicine and gastroenterology, he joined the UCT Liver Research Centre in Cape Town as a fellow under the direction of Ralph Kirsch, Richard Hift, Enid Shephard and Simon Robson. Eric was awarded an MMed for his research on primary sclerosing cholangitis. Working with Pauline Hall in the UCT Department of Anatomical Pathology, Wentzel Gelderblom and Wally Marasas at the South African MRC, Eric and Simon characterised the phenotypic markers of liver progenitor cells and the role of stem cells in the generation of liver tumours by fumonisin B1, a carcinogenic mycotoxin that is a natural contaminant of corn worldwide and causes both HCC and cholangiocarcinoma in rats. This work led to the award of a PhD degree from UCT in 2000 and to an important collaboration with Dr Snorri Thorgeirsson at the National Cancer Institute (NCI), Bethesda, Maryland.

In April 1998 Lemmer moved to the USA to complete a 4-year liver research programme in the laboratory of Dr Thorgeirsson. His research concerned the generation and study



of transgenic and conditional knockout mice involved in the study of liver regeneration and carcinogenesis. Thereafter, he repeated his medical and fellowship requirements – initially at Georgetown University Medical Center (Washington, DC) and at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York City. At Mount Sinai, Dr Lemmer was embarking upon a career in translational research with Dr Scott Friedman and Josep Llovet. He was Assistant Professor of Medicine in the Division of Liver Diseases at Mount Sinai School of Medicine and Assistant Director of their newly established Liver Cancer Program. Dr Lemmer had recently been awarded a highly prestigious research scholar award from the American Gastroenterological Association (AGA) for a project entitled the ‘Dysregulation of hedgehog signaling in hepatocellular carcinoma’. Other aspects of his research work had been presented at the American Association for the Study of Liver Disease meeting in Boston in October 2006, just over a month before his untimely death.

In addition to his outstanding academic qualities, Eric Lemmer was a true Renaissance man who loved all that life

could offer. He was an excellent bassoonist and had toured with youth ensembles and played in professional orchestras. Eric was a gentle, considerate enthusiast who radiated a special love and warmth to his friends, colleagues and patients.

His parents in Johannesburg, his sister Natalie, brother-in-law Dr John Lawrenson and their family in Cape Town, several cousins, and his partner, Ms Alice Baker of New York, survive him. We, together with many friends and colleagues around the world, will miss him deeply.

**Simon C Robson  
Michael Voigt  
Roy Zent  
Tony Bass  
Peter Meissner  
Richard Hift  
John Lawrenson  
Del Kahn  
Flip Bornman  
Bongani Mayosi  
Ralph Kirsch**