

## DES MARTIN – A TRIBUTE



Professor Des Martin was the visionary who in 1998 saw a need and pulled together a group of HIV specialists who became the founder members of the HIV Clinicians Society of South Africa. It has become the largest interest group of the South African Medical Association and now has branches throughout the SADC region. This phenomenal growth is a tribute to Des's extraordinary ability to inspire and challenge others to take up the cudgels and fight the good fight. The mushrooming number of branches in other countries in this region also speaks to Des's passion for Africa and his deep-seated commitment to see capacity grow throughout the continent. He has personally visited most of these branches at their inaugural meetings and then singlehandedly nurtured them to independence. Many branches now provide some of the most critical support and continuing medical education to HIV doctors in their areas.

Des is no stranger to hard work. Born and bred in Johannesburg, educated at Wits, he started his career as a general practitioner first in Johannesburg but then moving to the 'Eastern Transvaal' where he became a household name among the farmers and townspeople of the Nelspruit area. He devoted 20 years to general practice before heeding the call to academia and returning to Wits to specialise in clinical virology. Subsequently Des has held pivotal posts in the National Institute of Virology and national pathology structures. He is currently a consultant virologist at Toga Laboratories, and a senior member of the Departments of Virology at Wits and the University of Pretoria.

Des launched the *Southern African Journal of HIV Medicine* as president of the Society in August 2000. From the first distinctive edition with its bold design and eye-catching colour the journal has gone from strength to strength. Remarkably, Des has involved world-renowned HIV specialists on the editorial board and forged important and strategic

partnerships with a wide range of people, institutions, funders and organisations.

Des has a wonderful ability to spot talent, especially in younger members, and has framed the careers of many who now play important roles in South African HIV and virology. Encouraged by Des, Francois Venter took over the reins as president of the Society in 2005, and Linda-Gail Bekker stepped into his shoes as editor just in the last two months. Des is a hard act to follow. He describes himself as a 'fence sitter', but in fact it is his masterful diplomacy and artful chairmanship of meetings, especially in the presence of strong personalities and opinions, that (together with an incorrigible sense of fun and outstanding sense of humour) have made him stand out as a statesman of note.

Des is a devoted family man, father to five grown children and some grandchildren, and loves nothing better than to spend time on the golf course, or at their holiday home in KwaZulu-Natal, with his talented wife Lori. He is a sportaholic who can be relied upon to know the score of most cricket and rugby matches while they are still being played.

Professor Des Martin, the Society and the editorial team salute you for all your years of commitment and service. We wish you well as you take a little more time for relaxation, but greatly appreciate your ongoing wisdom with so much still to be done in combating the HIV epidemic in South Africa.

**LINDA-GAIL BEKKER**

*Editor*

