

Johannes Hendrik Groenewald, 21 November 1935 - 2 October 2010

Hannes Groenewald was one of South Africa's first generation of intensivists and a former President of the Critical Care Society of Southern Africa. After obtaining his MB ChB at the University of Pretoria in 1960 he specialised in surgery at Stellenbosch University and was awarded the MMed in 1968. He planned and commissioned the Surgical Intensive Care Unit at the new Tygerberg Hospital and ensured that it was equipped with the most advanced technology available at the time. He was Head of the SICU from 1975 until his retirement in 2001. After retiring he continued to work at Tygerberg Hospital in administration, overseeing the procurement of consumables until a few weeks before his death at the age of 74.

Hannes served on the council of the Critical Care Society of Southern Africa during the 1980s, organised several highly successful critical care congresses in the Cape, and served a term as President of the Society. His interest in intensive care probably grew from his practice as a vascular surgeon and soon became his main passion. He introduced the pulmonary artery catheter, volume-cycled ventilators, parenteral nutrition and vasopressors to critical care at Tygerberg Hospital. He was fascinated by technology, was a keen and early user of the personal computer, and established the first non-invasive vascular laboratory in the country.

Hannes came across as a very reserved, almost taciturn man, but would occasionally break into a half smile when something tickled his wry sense of humour. He was very tolerant of new and inexperienced consultants in the ICU, giving them a free hand to run things their own way. However, on matters of principle, and when it came to protecting the interest of the SICU, he was formidable. During the 1984 outbreak of Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever, when the SICU was quarantined and managing critically ill members of its own staff, he worked tirelessly lobbying the health authorities, even managing to get a new Coulter counter purchased and flown to the hospital overnight so that platelet counts could be done around the clock without having to send the blood samples out of the unit.

Hannes's private life was very private. He loved jazz and rock, and possessed a huge collection of music and, of course, the most sophisticated hi fi system. He was devoted to his family and leaves his wife Rina and children Ilinda, Retha and Deon.

W L Michell