



06 July 2020

Dr. Dennis Sifris - In Memorium

Dr. Dennis Sifris was a pioneer in the field of HIV medicine and care in South Africa. He committed to care within HIV management and worked tirelessly in the field since the start of the epidemic, almost 40 years ago.

In 1984, Dennis was central to team that established the first HIV clinic in Africa at the then Johannesburg General Hospital, together with the late Professor Reuben Sher. He went on to serve as the head of the clinic for five years.

Dennis holds a special place in the hearts of all of us at the Southern African HIV Clinicians Society (SAHCS). He was committed and instrumental as a cofounder of SAHCS over 20 years ago. His courage, fortitude, and foresight during those early days of the HIV epidemic in South Africa earned him an Honorary Life Membership of SAHCS. He maintained his links with SAHCS and was frequently called on and gracious to share his knowledge and vast experience at the SAHCS biennial conferences. He was also the main contributor to the HIV and Aging Module for the Advanced HIV Management online course for Doctors.

Dennis remained a steadfast and passionate advocate for the rights of people living with HIV. His place within the HIV space in South Africa was recognized when he was asked to serve as advisor to President Nelson Mandela prior to the president's appearance at the XIV International AIDS Conference in Barcelona.

Dennis's commitment to the prompt and proper management of Patients with HIV, in the private sector, resulted in his association with LifeSense HIV Disease Management in 1999. He served as its Chief Medical Officer from its inception to date. He used this platform to keep health care providers informed of developments in the treatment of HIV while overseeing the care of well over 120,000 people living with HIV.

According to Professor Francois Venter, ex-president of SAHCS, who worked as a junior doctor in the Johannesburg Hospital (Charlotte Maxeke) AIDS clinic: "Dennis left the Gen's HIV clinic, the oldest in the country, shortly before I joined in 2000. I learnt a fortune just reading his notes, during a rapid transition from a clinic largely filled with gay white men, to one that was simply a snapshot of South Africa. He remained involved in the HIV response throughout, in different capacities, and I will always remember his empathy combined with pragmatism in dealing with patients". And current president, Professor Yunus Moosa recalls how "the few times I met him he struck me as a kind, gentle soul with a good sense of humour. It's so true that after you go people will remember how you made them feel more than what they did for you". Board member and deputy-president Dr Ndiviwe Mphothulo sends condolences to his family and remembering Dennis says, "we are honoured and blessed to have benefited from his work in HIV Management and advocacy".

Dennis will be sorely missed by patient and colleagues.

We would like to wish his loved ones our love and condolences.

on behalf of the Southern African HIV Clinicians Society Board of Directors and Staff