

Dr Leonie Schoeman

9 April 1962 – 17 June 2022

It was with great sadness that the George medical fraternity learnt of the passing of Dr Leonie Schoeman on 17 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 1980s, Leonie was an example to the many young women who now practise surgery.

Born in Piet Retief in 1962, she matriculated at the Eldoraigne 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.

Leonie did her internship at Tygerberg Hospital, where our paths first crossed, and where she met Frederik, her husband to be. This was also where her love for surgery and trauma surgery, in particular, was stimulated while working in various trauma units. She started her registrarship at Groote Schuur and the Red Cross Children's Hospital in 1988, and in the same year, she and Frederik were married.

In 1991 the couple moved to Gauteng, where Leonie completed her registrarship at the then Johannesburg and Baragwanath hospitals and completed her studies at the University of the Witwatersrand, obtaining her FCS in 1995. In 1996, whilst working as a consultant in general and paediatric surgery, she was awarded the Michael and Jamie Miller Foundation Fellowship. In 1997, she worked as the visiting specialist registrar at the Great Ormond Street Hospital for children in London, and returned to the Chris Hani Baragwanath hospital as a consultant paediatric surgeon from 1998 to 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 to 2009, she was Head of the George Mediclinic 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 Lancaster Royal Infirmary, 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 ethic 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 shared several glasses of wine with Leonie, including when her time was nigh. She was philosophical and wise and 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.

Mike Sunshine