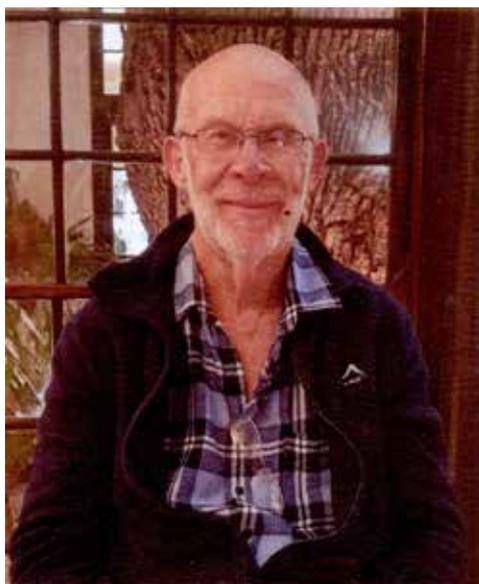




Michael Francis Perkin

25/06/1943–16/11/2020

N (Natie) Finkelstein and J McCartney



It is with profound regret and with much sadness that we report the recent demise of an icon in pharmaceutical education in South Africa. Michael or simply Mike (the name by which he was fondly known) Perkin passed away on 16 November 2020 aged 77 years. A memorial service was conducted by Pastor Scott Tubman at the Durbanville Memorial Park Chapel on 25 November 2020. He is survived by his wife, Barbara, and extended family. On behalf of the entire pharmaceutical profession, we extend to his heartbroken wife, son, daughters and grandchildren our heartfelt sympathy and deepest condolences in this irreparable loss.

Mike's late father was a pharmacist, and that may have influenced him to study pharmacy at the Port Elizabeth Technical College in Russell Road, Port Elizabeth, where he obtained the Diploma in Pharmacy in 1967. His talent as a teacher was soon realised and he was appointed as a lecturer at the same institution where he had studied. In 1990 he was presented with a certificate for 21 years of loyal service by the Rector of the PE Technikon.

Natie, then a Senior Lecturer in the School of Pharmacy at Rhodes University and appointed as an external examiner, frequently encountered Mike on visits to Port Elizabeth and a strong, long-lasting friendship developed. Mike registered for post-graduate

studies in experimental pharmacology and applied himself with exceptional ardour to his work in cardiovascular research. At the 6th Annual Congress of the Academy of Pharmaceutical Sciences, Mike was awarded a prize for the best poster for his research. During that time, he came into contact with some prominent clinical luminaries like Professor Brian Rayner and the late Professor Lionel Opie. For the culmination of that research, he was awarded a Master's degree from the University of the Western Cape in 1987 and subsequently was promoted to Senior Lecturer and Subject Head of Pharmacology and Applied Therapeutics in the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Port Elizabeth (now Nelson Mandela University). Mike had a passion for teaching and his solid background in chemistry merged well with his love of pharmacology. He had the ability to visualise and simplify difficult concepts, and his lectures were often focused on detailed diagrams he created on the board or overhead transparencies, that were painstakingly copied down by students, at a time when summary diagrams in pharmacology textbooks were scanty or absent altogether.

In 2000 Mike left the employ of UPE and settled in Cape Town, where he and his wife Barbara started an educational enterprise, Pharmacy Education International (PEI). In 2002 he launched the first of his enrichment programmes, viz. the hypertension course. In 2005 he approached Natie Finkelstein to produce a comprehensive dispensing course for other health practitioners, e.g. medical practitioners and nurses. This programme was offered at the Alexandra Hospital premises for some seven years, with Mike and Natie sharing the teaching load. In 2012 when the numbers and interest were waning, Mike continued on his own, but soon realised that this was too much for one individual.

With the assistance of Dr Fritz Snyckers, he converted the dispensing course into an online programme. It is a unique learning experience where the activity of the student is monitored and evaluated at all levels. Mike and Fritz have developed several other interesting CPD programmes, many of which have been utilised by pharmaceutical companies to train their representatives and technical staff.

During Natie's Chairmanship of the Academy of Pharmaceutical Sciences in 1989/90, he was fortunate to have two Port Elizabeth pharmacists as the Secretary of the organisation. Peter Persicaner

served during his first year of office, followed by Mike Perkin. Mike also served the Academy with distinction as its Chairman in 1994/1995. When Natie was awarded Honorary Life Membership of the Academy, Mike's signature on the certificate provided a constant reminder of the memorable symbiotic relationship that existed between them.

What Mike did for himself will surely have died with him, but what he did for his many students over decades of dedicated care and genuine interest will live on for many years to come. His significant contribution to the pharmacy and other healthcare professions through the training of pharmacy students, medical practitioners, nurses and other health professionals is indeed legendary.

Whilst Mike was undoubtedly greatly appreciated as an academic of note, it was Mike the caring individual, who we most admired. He will always be remembered as a passionate teacher and innovative thinker who could develop a unique method of learning and which he ably complemented with his uncanny flair for making complex concepts very simple. In all his manuals or submissions to the South African Pharmacy Council, he was the ultimate perfectionist and his meticulous attention to detail was quite phenomenal. He lived by the mantra of "enhancing patients' lives through training excellence". Whilst he took standards in education rather seriously, he did have a mischievous sense of humour. His engaging smile and friendly disposition will forever remain indelibly marked in our memories.

Mike is endowed with many other attributes. We will remember him in particular for his exemplary patience. His willingness to help any student in distress was a testimony to his compassion and equanimity. He loved sport and was quite an accomplished golfer. There is no doubt in our minds that he could easily have forsaken academia and become a very successful professional golfer, as many of his golfing partners can attest. He loved cricket and he enjoyed his experience at Newlands when he and Barbara watched a test match at that famous venue.

Whilst we could continue to extol the many virtues of the late Michael Francis Perkin, suffice it to say that he was the very epitome of a gentleman in every sense of the word. He studied the scriptures in depth and read enthusiastically to seek novel interpretations of biblical passages in writings of philosophers, theologians and archaeologists. He tended to shun dogma but was always a deep thinker and spiritually committed.

Ave atque vale, Mike. It is our fervent prayer that your cherished soul finds eternal peace in the knowledge that you had many admirers and grateful students, in whose successful careers you had made such an immeasurable and invaluable contribution. Your legacy will live on in those that have passed through your hands over many selfless years and you will be forever remembered with great affection. May the wonderful memories associated with Mike be a blessing for all of us.