



NSSA newsbits

Emeritus Professor David Sanders

5/8/1945 – 30/8/2019

We are saddened by the sudden passing of Prof. David Sanders on Friday 30 August 2019 of a heart attack while on holiday in Wales, UK, at the age of 74. Prof. Sanders was well-known in the nutrition community in South Africa with his first engagement being his



participation as a keynote speaker in a continuing education event organised at the University of the Western Cape in 1992. He served on the NSSA council from 1998–2000 and received the prestigious NSSA award for outstanding contribution to nutrition research in South Africa in 2002. Although he retired ten years ago, he continued to work as actively as before (if not more so) and many will remember his critical and passionate contributions to the 2018 Nutrition Congress where he was a keynote speaker on the conflict of interest debate. He was also the chairperson of the organising and scientific committee of the 2016 World Public Health Nutrition Association Congress held in Cape Town.

David Sanders was born in South Africa, but grew up in Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia) where he qualified as a medical doctor. During the 1970s he lived in the UK, where he specialised in paediatrics and public health. He returned to Zimbabwe in 1981 and as a lecturer in paediatrics at the then University of Zimbabwe Medical School, he was instrumental in the initiation of community-based training for medical doctors and the development of community-based nutrition monitoring and interventions.

In 1993 Prof. Sanders established the Public Health Programme (subsequently known as the School of Public Health[SOPH]) at the University of the Western Cape (UWC), becoming its founding director. He led the school until his retirement in 2009. During his years there he developed a world-renowned distance learning Masters in Public Health that graduated students from all over Africa. It was the first multidisciplinary Masters in Public Health. Besides its postgraduate programmes and research work, SOPH is well

known for its courses for health managers and policy makers and many dietitians and nutritionists in South Africa have participated in one of the Summer or Winter schools over the years. David was also a founding member of the DST/NRF Centre of Excellence in Food Security (CoE-FS), from the first meetings when the proposal was being prepared at UWC. David continued to serve as a principal investigator of the programme and focused on causes and consequences of malnutrition until 2016 when he joined as a member of the Steering Committee of the CoE-FS.

David was an activist at heart. He believed that nutrition (and health) was political and that without strong social mobilisation nothing would change. He was a founding member of the People's Health Movement (PHM) in 2000, a global network of health activists, civil society organisations, and academic institutions. He remained active in PHM, including as Co-Chair of its global Steering Council.

David will be remembered for his commitment to a just health and public nutrition system, his mentorship of new generations of scholars and his prodigious output as an active researcher and an activist. David would prefer that his passing be inspiration for renewed energy to further these goals.

Besides his achievements David loved his family, he was a great storyteller with a lot of jokes. He loved people. He leaves a wife Sue Fawcus, and children Ben, Lisa, and Oscar.

Krisela Steyn

19 June 1941 – 7 October 2019

We are saddened by the unexpected passing away of our wonderful colleague and friend Prof. Krisela Steyn on 7th October 2019 whilst returning to South Africa from a holiday in Italy. She was truly one of a kind. We shall remember her as an inspiring public health researcher who was committed to reducing the burden of personal and societal non-communicable diseases. She was renowned for her collaborative style,



affirmation of others, mentoring and growing the next generation of researchers, whilst raising her four sons as a single parent and eventually becoming the proud grandmother of 11 grandchildren.

Krisela Steyn started her professional career as a biochemist (University of Stellenbosch) and lecturing at the University of the Western Cape. However, she always dreamed of Medicine and started to study again ten years after obtaining her Masters in Biochemistry. She was at that time a single parent and the sole breadwinner with four sons. She qualified in Medicine at the University of Cape Town in 1979 and the MD degree was conferred upon her in 1987 for research completed in the Department of Community Health.

Krisela met Professor Jacques Rossouw in 1982 and she joined the team at the Research Institute for Nutritional Diseases (RNID) of the Medical Research Council as senior medical officer. She was a team member of the first epidemiological cohort intervention study in South Africa (carried out in three towns in the Southern Cape) on risk factors for coronary heart disease. Thereafter she was the Principle Researcher for a study assessing the risk factors for coronary heart disease in the Western Cape. She joined the Centre for Epidemiology as chief specialist scientist and was later appointed head of the division.

Research by Krisela led to the setting up of the Chronic Diseases of Lifestyle (CDL) Research Unit of the Medical Research Council and she was Director from 1998 to 2006 after which she retired from the Medical Research Council. During this time she was contacted by the World Health Organization to be appointed as Director of the Collaborating Centre for Chronic Diseases of Lifestyle. She acted as a consultant to the Department of Health, University of Cape Town and other organisations. Her research involved public health research highlighting the increasing burden of chronic diseases and their risk factors in developing countries associated with changes in tobacco use, diet, exercise and other lifestyles. The Unit conducted seminal work on the impact of hypertension and smoking as well as building the evidence base for interventions. Her work identified high risk groups and showed that South Africans with risk factors for cardiovascular diseases received inadequate treatment, highlighted the worsening risk factor patterns, and stressed the urgency for interventions. This research has undoubtedly established South Africa as one of the leading countries in determining the epidemiology of CDL in developing countries.

Krisela was involved in numerous community interventions to test various models in order to reduce CDL risk factors. This led her, together with Prof. Debbie Bradshaw, to spearhead an adult health section for South Africa's first Demographic and Health Surveys. This initiative ensured that national data is available to inform and assist health policy decisions

to improve health services for CDL in adults. She was also instrumental in the development of policies and regulations regarding smoking and later the legislation on salt reduction in foods.

Following her formal retirement from the SAMRC she was appointed at UCT from 2005 where she assumed a pivotal role in the establishment of the Chronic Disease Initiative for Africa (CDIA) in 2008. As Deputy Director, she helped create the partnership between several Western Cape based institutions with the ambition of developing and testing tools to address chronic diseases in the primary care setting and in the community. She was instrumental in guiding the CDIA towards implementation by strengthening the partnerships with government and non-governmental agencies and was dedicated to training and mentoring students in the complexities of public health research. She finally retired from CDIA in 2016.

Krisela was a prolific writer and has authored nearly 200 local and international publications, numerous technical reports and MRC policy briefs and has been a sought-after speaker at local and international scientific meetings, with over 200 presentations to her name. She has also received a number of national and international awards and recognitions for her contribution to chronic disease research.

She was a passionate advocate for the prevention and management of non-communicable diseases, served on the boards of national organisations such as the Heart and Stroke Foundation, was frequently consulted by the National Department of Health and contributed to global initiatives that brought these conditions to the forefront and culminated in the first high-level meeting on non-communicable diseases held by the UN in 2011.

She was known for her 'no-nonsense' approach to work as well as a nurturing mentor to many young scientists and researchers. Her acknowledgement of the expertise of medical and other health professionals and her collaboration with them to serve the bigger purpose of preventing non-communicable diseases made her an exceptional person and role model. Colleagues became friends and joined her on hiking and walking trips in the 'veld', travelling the world, and enjoying theatre and music events.

Krisela will be sadly missed by all of us.

FANUS congress, Kigali, Rwanda, 26–30 August 2019

Dr Bianca van der Westhuizen represented NSSA at the recent Federation of African Nutrition Societies (FANUS) congress held in Kigali, Rwanda from 26–30 August 2019. FANUS is a conglomeration of nutrition societies of the African nations with the vision to market and sustain the nutrition agenda throughout Africa. A congress is hosted every four years

to share and uplift nutrition research within the African continent. The next FANUS congress will therefore be held in 2023.

The main purpose of the attendance was to market the upcoming International Congress of Dietetics (ICD 2020) to be hosted by ADSA and NSSA in Cape Town in September 2020. Because this will be the first time the ICD will be held on the African continent, we envision a large African representation and therefore found the FANUS congress to be an ideal platform to market the ICD 2020.



Dr Christine Taljaard-Krugell (ADSA president) and Dr Bianca van der Westhuizen (NSSA Northern-branch chairperson) at the ICD 2020 stand at the FANUS congress, Kigali, Rwanda.



Prof. Naushad Emmambux presenting to the audience at the NSSA seminar held during the SAAFoST Congress.

NSSA sponsored seminar at the SAAFoST Congress 2019

On 4 September 2019 NSSA hosted an independent seminar within the SAAFoST Congress 2019 held in Johannesburg. The purpose was to address nutrition topics pertinent to the food industry and it was well attended. The following topics were presented:

Optimum nutrition: a nutritionist's view of the role of food scientists and food technologists (by Chantell Witten, North-West University, on behalf of Carol Brown)

Linking current advances in nutritional research to food product development: decreasing energy density and increasing nutrient density of foods (by Prof. Naushad Emmambux, University of Pretoria)

The role of African vegetables and fruits as functional foods and their health benefits (by Prof. Dharini Sivakumar, Tshwane University of Technology)

Nutrient profiling: a tool for healthier food products (by Dr Mariaan Wicks, North-West University)



Presenters, organisers and audience members at the NSSA seminar. From left to right: Nolene Naicker (DoH); Maude de Hoop (DoH), Dr Elize Symington (NSSA chairperson), Dr Mariaan Wicks (presenter, NWU), Rebone Ntsie (DoH), Nazeeia Sayed (Consultant dietitian), Chantell Witten (presenter, NWU), Prof. Dharini Sivakumar (presenter, TUT)