

Obituary: Dr Andrew Truscott (1946 – 2009)

Andrew Garside Truscott passed away suddenly but peacefully on Tuesday 1st December 2009 while on leave in Mpumalanga. He was in the company of his family.

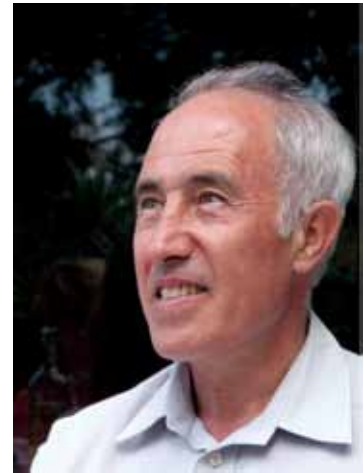
A Wits medical graduate, Dr Truscott had a real heart for the poor and powerless in society. After a stint at St Barnabas Hospital, Libode, he began working in the Soweto clinics. When doctors were withdrawn from Soweto after the 1976 uprising, the late Professor Lucy Wagstaff began training nurses in clinical skills to manage paediatric patients at the clinics. This was soon followed by training in adult clinical care, which Dr Truscott became involved in. This developed into a one year postgraduate diploma, the “Diploma in Clinical Nursing Science, Health Assessment, Treatment and Care”.

Dr Truscott developed excellent clinical and teaching skills during his 30 years of experience in training and working alongside primary health care nurses in Soweto. He was one of the authors of the widely-used Primary Clinical Care Manual, commonly known as the Soweto manual, now in its 4th edition. He played a leading role nationally in supporting the training of primary health care nurses.

He was initially sceptical of the clinical associates programme, because of his concern that this new cadre may be a threat to PHC nurses, but once he realised the important and unique role they could play in a district hospital, filling a need in a similar way to PHC nurses in clinics, he became an enthusiastic supporter and contributed to the national formulation of the programme. He joined the Division of Rural Health at Wits in May 2006 to assist with the development of the BCMP degree (Clinical Associates programme).

In June 2007 he was formally appointed by the national Department of Health as the Clinical Associates Programme Coordinator at Wits, and brought enormous enthusiasm and energy into developing the curriculum, which was launched in January this year with the first group of 25 students. He was also involved in teaching and assessing GEMP 4 students doing the IPC block, as well as supporting the students’ outreach work such as Paballo and Trinity clinics.

The art of family medicine came naturally to him, in that he always saw his patients as whole people and treated them holistically. He combined this with a thirst for knowledge (he was known to include physiology textbooks in his bedside reading!) and a commitment to excellent care. For this reason, he was very pleased to become part of and be recognised by an academic department of family medicine.



His Christian faith was central in all he did. He played a leading role in the Christian Medical Fellowship in Gauteng, and served as a mentor medically, emotionally and spiritually to many students and young doctors.

He took delight in assisting people, and was interested in everyone, taking time to find out about people and their families, no matter who they were, from cleaners to nurses, secretaries to professors. Everyone was important to him.

He was single-minded in pursuing what he believed was the right course of action, yet this was always tempered by care for others and a wonderful sense of humour. He saw difficulties and challenges in a positive outlook. He gave unfailing encouragement to those around him, yet was self-deprecating. He seldom said anything negative about others.

He was passionately interested in nature, particularly trees and birds. A trip with him would usually be punctuated by comments about interesting trees he observed, and he would sometimes disrupt divisional meetings on the 10th floor to point out birds in flight. It is fitting that he spent the day before he died walking and enjoying the flora and fauna near Lydenburg.

His dedication, passion, humility and professionalism were an example to all.

He is survived by his wife Patricia and son Mathew.

Ian Couper

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