Dear Colleagues

Professor Christopher T. Bolliger (1950 – 2012)

It is with great sadness that I have to inform you of the untimely passing of our colleague, Prof Chris Bolliger on Friday November 2, 2012.

Prof Bolliger was a renowned pulmonologist, co-head of the Division of Pulmonology of the Department Medicine, Director and Head of the Respiratory Research Unit of the Department, and one of only a handful of smoking cessation experts in southern Africa.

Born in Switzerland, he completed his medical training in 1976 at the medical schools at Basel and Lausanne, Switzerland. He came to South Africa in the 1980’s to do a BSc (Hons) in Epidemiology at the University of Stellenbosch. On completion of his studies in 1989 he returned to Switzerland where he was appointed consultant and associate professor in the Division of Pulmonology at the University of Basel and where he also completed a PhD degree.

Ten years later, in 1999, he returned to the Faculty of Health Sciences of SU, when he was appointed co-chairman of the Pulmonology division and director of the Respiratory Research Unit. In both research and his clinical work he set very high standards for himself and those working with him.

His early and ongoing research interest had always been thoracic oncology, with special emphasis on interventional bronchoscopy and thoracoscopy – both diagnostic and therapeutic. The high standard of his research in this field enjoyed international recognition and in 2010 his unit was selected as the preferred site for the first ever international clinical study to evaluate the use of real-time technology for tracking lung tumours during radiation delivery. This pioneering work culminated in a first-in-man publication.

Prof Bolliger also played an active role in research aimed at smoking control and cessation. Earlier this year, he co-authored guidelines on smoking cessation in Africa and the Middle East for health care providers, focusing on smoking prevention, cessation and the effects of smoking on the health of populations in the two regions. He was also an elected a member of the Global Healthcare Alliance for Treatment of Tobacco Dependence (GHATTD).
In 2010, Prof Bolliger’s achievements in the field of Pulmonology received international recognition when he was awarded a Lifetime Achievement Certificate at the World Congress for Bronchology in Budapest, Hungary, where he delivered his honorary lecture on the staging of lung cancer.

Professor Bolliger was a prolific writer. He was editor-in-chief of the international journal, *Respiration*, and he was editor of a renowned international book series, *Progress in Respiratory Research*. The latest volume in this series, namely *Diffuse Parenchymal Lung Disease*, received a ‘Highly Commended’ award in the book competition organized by the Library of the British Medical Association, London. He was also a past president of the European Association of Bronchology and Interventional Pulmonology. Over and above that was his ability to inspire and motivate others with his unbridled passion.

Prof Bolliger was married to nursing sister, Xandra, who assisted him through the years with the establishment of smoking cessation programmes, clinical trials and clinics – in both Switzerland and South Africa. The couple was blessed with three daughters, who were his pride and joy.

Professor Bolliger’s passing will leave a huge vacuum, not only in the Department, but also in the Faculty, nationally and internationally. This is reflected in a statement by Dr Henri Colt, Chairman of World Association of Bronchoscopy Interventional Pulmonology (WABIP) who, in paying tribute to Professor Bolliger wrote “…we shall greatly miss his honesty, knowledge, forthrightness, technical expertise, intellectual curiosity, energy and tremendous can-do attitude”. I can only concur.

The family kindly requests that friends and colleagues do not send flowers. Cards and personal notes will be highly appreciated and can be send to his secretary Ms Colleen Charters, Room 3013, Clinical Building, or cdchar@sun.ac.za.

Signed with sadness,

M R Moosa
Executive Head and Professor: Department of Medicine