Stephen (FS) Hough
27 August 1947 - 5 December 2014

Stephen Hough was one of the finest clinician-scientists to have emanated from South Africa. In his early thirties, and already an established researcher with numerous degrees in medicine and science, he was earmarked by his mentors for advanced training in the USA. From 1979-1981, he worked at Washington University in St Louis, Missouri, while on a two-year research fellowship in Endocrinology and Metabolism. This centre was famed for its work in metabolic bone disease and jump-started Stephen’s lifelong passion for this field, and osteoporosis, in particular.

On his return to the Department of Medicine at Stellenbosch University’s medical faculty, Stephen became head of the newly developed Metabolic Unit (later the Division of Endocrinology) at Tygerberg Hospital. Over the next 30 years until retirement, Prof Hough was pre-eminently responsible for this unit being one of the top training and referral centres in endocrinology in South Africa, as well as a leader in osteoporosis. In 1993, he founded the National Osteoporosis Foundation of South Africa (NOFSA), and held the position of President of NOFSA ever since.

From 2001-2006, Prof Hough was elected Chairman (Head) of the Department of Medicine at Stellenbosch University. He retired at the end of 2012, but was too active and enthusiastic not to stay involved. Besides opening a private practice, as Emeritus Professor he committed one full day weekly to his alma mater, which included teaching, as well as mentoring five new PhD candidates.

Not only did he receive numerous local accolades over the last 40 years, he also held senior office in the Society for Endocrinology, Diabetes and Metabolism of South Africa (SEMDSA) (he was Chairman from 1992-1994), the Colleges of Medicine of South Africa, the South African Diabetes Association and the South African Medical Research Council. Internationally, he has also held high office in many societies, including being on the Committee of Scientific Advisors for the International Osteoporosis Foundation (IOF), the International Advisory Panel of the American Paget Foundation, and on the Membership Committee of the International Bone and Mineral Society.

He was also elected to represent Africa on the IOF Board of Governance. He was the founder editor of Journal of Endocrinology, Metabolism and Diabetes of South Africa, and a reviewer for several prestigious international journals.

I have known Stephen Hough for nearly three decades, at first as a revered elder in our field, and later as a colleague and good friend. Stephen was always warm to all and sundry, and not bothered by ego. He was never pretentious, nor acted superior to his most junior colleagues. There were no hidden agendas, and he was as honest as the day is long. If he strongly disagreed with those in “authority”, he was not afraid to tackle them head on. He never harboured prejudice and he abhorred racism, even in an era when this practice was frequently the norm.

We pay homage to a loving husband and father, a true friend, a national and international icon in his field, and a giant of a man – full of gusto, humility and passion. We will never again hear that booming baritone voice filling the room, but we are all so much richer for having known Stephen.

Brynne Ascott-Evans