

Kay de Villiers

Jacquez Charl de Villiers (7 March 1928, Klerksdorp – 5 June 2018, Cape Town), known as Kay de Villiers, was a South African neurosurgeon. He was the third child of Carel (Callie) van der Merwe de Villiers and Susanna Johanna Joubert. He died on 5 June 2018 in Cape Town at the age of 90 after a short hospital stay.

He qualified as doctor at the University of Cape Town. Following graduation and internship at the Groote Schuur Hospital, he commenced general practice in Swellendam for four years before taking up a lecturer post in Anatomy in 1957 at the newly established University of Stellenbosch Medical School.

He studied for five years in the UK, undergoing neurosurgical training at the National Hospital for Nervous Diseases, Queen Square and Atkinson Morley's Hospital, Wimbledon. During this time he was mentored by Wylie McKissock, doyen of British neurosurgery.

After his return to South Africa he was appointed by the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Cape Town, where he was promoted in 1970 to full-time head of the Department of Neurosurgery, and in 1972 to associate professor. In 1976 he became the first incumbent of the Helen and Morris Mauerberger Chair of Neurosurgery.

According to an obituary on the University of Cape Town website, "While his research interests were those of any dedicated clinician, reflecting the diversity of conditions he encountered in his daily practice, he made special contributions to the understanding of head injury in children, in work done with the young Dr Marian Jacobs.

De Villiers was the face of Neurosurgery in South Africa, pioneering new techniques learned in Zurich, Charlottesville and Paris - the latter allowing him to bring back the new technique of trans-sphenoidal pituitary surgery - and an appreciation of fine cognac which never waned and enlivened visits to his home."

He received many awards and was a member of various scientific organisations worldwide. He is the only South African elected an Honorary President of the World Federation of Neurosurgical Societies.

He was visiting professor at various local and international academic departments. He received two honorary doctoral degrees, and was appointed a special visiting scientist by the Medical Research Council of South Africa.

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