

## HONORARY GRADUATE

### Hendrik Johannes Koornhof

Hendrik Johannes Koornhof graduated in medicine from the University of Cape Town in 1951, and received the Diploma in Clinical Pathology from the Royal Postgraduate Medical School in London in 1960 and the Diploma in Bacteriology from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine in 1966. In 1973 he became a founder member of the Royal College of Pathologists.

In January 1960 Dr Koornhof became head of the Department of Medical Microbiology at the South African Institute for Medical Research and served in that capacity for eleven years. In 1971, when joint appointments between the SAIMR and the University of the Witwatersrand were established, he was appointed Professor and Head of the Department of Medical Microbiology in the School of Pathology of the University of the Witwatersrand and the SAIMR. From August 1978 through 1991, Professor Koornhof served as Deputy Director of the SAIMR, and he was the Acting Director of the SAIMR during 1990. Since his retirement in 1992 he has been Emeritus Professor in the Department of Medical Microbiology and an Honorary Professorial Research Fellow of the University.

During a career which has spanned more than thirty years of service to the South African Institute for Medical Research and the University, Professor Koornhof has established an international reputation as an expert in the fields of bacteriology and infectious diseases. He has trained and mentored a generation of microbiologists who now hold key positions both in South Africa and abroad. He has served as President of the South African Society of Pathologists and as a member of the South African Medical Research Council. He has also served the University on numerous committees, including the chairmanship of the Nominating Committee of the Faculty of Medicine.

Throughout his life Professor Koornhof has maintained the very highest ethical and moral standards; he is a man with a strong sense of social responsibility. In this regard he was a founder member of the National Medical and Dental Association in the Transvaal which came into being at the time of the death of Steve Biko. He was also Chairman of the Dean's Anti-apartheid Committee during the late 1980s.

Professor Koornhof's contributions to infectious disease research in South Africa are legion. His greatest contribution has been within the area of respiratory infections. He worked with Professor Robert Austrian during the early 1970s to evaluate the first capsular polysaccharide pneumococcal vaccines, which formed the prototypes for vaccines which are used worldwide to prevent pneumonia in adults. The development of multiple antibiotic resistance in the pneumococcus was described for the first time by his team in a landmark paper in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, which heralded the era of antibiotic resistance in one of the most important human pathogens. He set up a surveillance system for new-generation pneumococcal vaccines for use in children's diseases, which has yielded invaluable information for the design of pneumococcal vaccines.

Professor Koornhof has also made major contributions to the study and control of sexually transmitted diseases and tuberculosis in South Africa. He is author of more than two hundred publications in the field of infectious diseases and is Editor of the *South African Journal of Epidemiology and Infection*. He serves on the Editorial Board of the *European Journal of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases*.

In honouring Professor Koornhof by the award of an honorary degree, the University recognises the distinction of one of its most dedicated and famous leaders. Professor Koornhof is a humble man who is quick to praise the efforts of his collaborators in research. He has not only made an enormous contribution to

his university and to his field within South Africa but has also been an inspiration to a large number of loyal and devoted students,

The medical profession, our university and our country have much to be proud of and grateful for when we honour Hendrik Johannes Koornhof by conferring upon him the degree of Doctor of Science in Medicine *honoris causa*.