

Theo J. G. van Rens

1931-1986



Theo van Rens died on August 9, 1986 at the age of 54 years. Shortly after the onset of the symptoms of his illness in May 1986, it became apparent that the prognosis was hopeless. He kept this knowledge to himself and thus preferred his work to a final period of rest with his family, as many would have taken. We know from his letters and oral instructions that he really continued his professional activities until the very end, which came sooner than many (he himself included) had expected. With his death, the Netherlands Orthopedic Society has lost one of its most prominent members, and this loss is all the more moving because it occurred while Theo was still very much in the midst of his life.

Theo van Rens was born in Probolinggo, Indonesia. He qualified as a medical doctor in Utrecht in 1957, having obtained his training in orthopedics from Professors E. J. Moeys and G. M. San Giorgi in Nijmegen, and started to practice in Amsterdam in 1965. He built up a flourishing practice at the Our Lady Hospital

(Onze Lieve Vrouwe Gasthuis) in Amsterdam and started training specialists in 1969.

In 1972, Theo van Rens was appointed Professor of Orthopedics at the Catholic University, St Radboud Hospital, Nijmegen, where his abounding energy and stimulating influence on his surroundings made the department and the training supplied there one of the most highly reputed in The Netherlands.

Theo van Rens established contacts with the technical universities at Eindhoven and Twente, and made an important contribution to the foundation of the Experimental Orthopedic Laboratory.

Important areas, such as pediatric orthopedics, surgery of scoliosis and of the vertebral column, surgery in rheumatism, implant and reconstructive surgery, surgery of the knee, arthroscopy surgery, and surgical oncology, were explored and developed at his department. Theo van Rens' personality enabled him to establish and maintain a great many contacts in The Netherlands, as well as abroad. Some-

times, he was like a spider in his web, and even in the most complex situations, he managed to find a solution, either through appropriate consultations or, equally often, by his own efforts.

His stimulating influence in scientific matters resulted in, among other things, twelve academic theses, many personal research projects (for example, surgery of the vertebral column and arthroscopic surgery for the knee), and numerous publications. In this way, he also played an important role in the Netherlands Orthopedic Society. In 1983, he was co-founder of the Traumatology Study Group, and served as its secretary. He was treasurer and secretary of the Dutch section of the SICOT.

For many years Theo van Rens was a member of the Concilium Orthopaedicum, of which he was chairman from 1976 until 1982. From 1983 on, he was a member of the board of the Netherlands Orthopedic Society and was its president during the period 1984 through 1986. During his period in office, he promoted several developments giving high priority to

the promotion of our specialty through conference addresses and publications.

Under Theo van Rens' guidance, the link between clinical orthopedics and biomechanics was established. Today, it is hardly conceivable to have a meeting of the Netherlands Orthopedic Society without some biomechanical subject being broached.

Despite all that Theo van Rens had already achieved, he was still full of ideas about the structure of orthopedics in The Netherlands and about research.

For the Netherlands Orthopedic Society in its present phase of development, the death of Professor Van Rens is an irreparable loss. He will live in our memory as a strong and charming personality, and his knowledge and skill will live on in the many disciples who received their training from him.

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