

HONORARY GRADUATE

Sidney Lionel Kark

Sidney Lionel Kark is a distinguished alumnus of this university who has contributed immeasurably to community health practice and theory in many parts of the world. At a time when this university, in keeping with many others, is striving to marry the concept of medicine in the community to its existing traditional medical emphasis, it is fitting that we should honour a man who, well ahead of his time, was a pioneer of the new direction in medicine.

The community of Johannesburg was only twenty-five years old when first it heard the voice of Sidney Kark as a lusty neonate in 1911. He matriculated at the Parktown Boys High School, which over the years has supplied this university's Medical School with perhaps the lion's share of its fine alumni.

In this tradition, Kark received his medical degree here in 1936. After two years in resident physician posts in medicine and paediatrics, he participated in 1939 in a national survey of the nutritional health status of African schoolchildren, conducted by the Department of Health. A year later this country took a dramatic step when the first rural health unit was set up, thanks to the vision of Professor Eustace H Cluver, then Secretary of Public Health, and of Dr Harry S Gear, then Deputy Chief Health Officer of Pretoria. The pioneering health centre was initiated and directed by Sidney Kark, at Pholela, Natal.

At the Pholela Health Centre, which was a trail-blazing institution of its kind, Kark selflessly supported by his wife, Dr Emily Kark, laid the foundations of social medicine in this continent. By 1943 the Karks were demonstrating the effectiveness of an integrated curative preventive approach to the health needs of a rural Black community. Already they were experimenting in the training of new types of auxiliary health aides to help meet the needs of rural Black people. In that year, Pholela was visited by the National Health Services Commission under Dr Henry Gluckman (whom this university honoured last year): what they saw of Sidney Kark's work there greatly influenced the Gluckman Commission's thinking and led to what Dr George Gale has called the most important of all their recommendations — to set up a National Health Service with health centres like that of Pholela as a central pivot.

To Pholela, for a number of years, went undergraduate medical students from Wits. In their vacations, under a student-initiated, self-education scheme in social medical practice. Subsequently five other health centres were set up under Kark's supervision. They provided personal, family and community health care to a number of underprivileged sections of the population in and around Durban. Their efforts were co-ordinated and directed through an Institute of Family and Community Health. The remarkable success of this programme is documented in a book entitled, 'The Practice of Social Medicine' by Kark and his associates.

Kark's eighteen-year stay in Natal was punctuated by periods spent at the Institute of Social Medicine and the Department of Anthropology at Oxford and at the Hadassah Medical School in Jerusalem. In the latter years of his service in Natal, Sidney Kark combined the Directorship of the Institute of Family and Community Health with the Professorship of Social Medicine at the Natal University Medical School. From his student days onwards, Kark was actively engaged in research and publication, especially in the fields of social medicine, disease patterns and health services among the Black population. In 1954, he gained the MD degree of this university for his work on 'Patterns of Health and Nutrition in the South African Bantu'.

In 1958 he became Professor and Chairman of the Department of Epidemiology at the University of North Carolina. A year later he moved to the Hadassah Medical School in Jerusalem, on a World Health Organisation assignment. Subsequently he became the Hebrew University's own Professor and Head of the Department of Social and Preventive Medicine — a post he still holds, at the age of seventy. The programme he initiated there includes an exceptionally good Master of Public Health degree programme through which he has trained large numbers of students from the developing world and elsewhere. He started a community health centre in Kiryat Hayovel as a practising health base for his Department, and this centre, like its precursor at Pholela, furthers the concept of integrated community health care. The essence of his programme is documented in his manual for graduate students, *Epidemiology and Community Medicine*.

Kark was a consultant to the World Health Organisation on a number of projects, and served on the WHO Expert Advisory Panel on Health Services and Manpower Development. He has held many visiting professorships at universities in South Africa, elsewhere in Africa, and in the United States. He has participated in numerous international conferences on public and community health and has been called as adviser to many parts of the world.

He maintains close links with South Africa. In 1967, as Visiting Professor at Wits, he advised on our proposed School of Community Health; on his most recent visit in 1980, he was guest lecturer in primary health care at the University of Natal. He has published some one hundred papers, books and monographs. In 1979 he received in the USA, the Robert H Felix Distinguished Service Award in Community Health/Community Medicine.

Professor Kark is married to Dr Emily Kark, also a Wits medical graduate. She has participated indelibly in his research and development programmes and, on her own account, has made sustained and notable contributions to social medicine.

The University wishes to recognize Professor Kark's invaluable pioneering work in South Africa. At the same time, we would pay tribute to an exemplary career which he has dedicated to teaching, pioneering, planning for and advising on community health needs, and which has contributed immeasurably, in many countries, to the alleviation of human suffering and the promotion of human health and welfare.