

## HONORARY GRADUATE

### LUCY ANNE WAGSTAFF

Lucy Anne Wagstaff was born on 30 April 1930 in Durban. She matriculated from Roedean School in Johannesburg and completed the degree of Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery at the University of the Witwatersrand in 1952.

During her student years, she was secretary and vice-president of the Students' Medical Council. After completing her internship and several house officer positions in Johannesburg, Lucy Wagstaff travelled to England to further her training. In 1960 she returned to South Africa to complete her paediatric training, and in 1964 she joined the permanent staff of the Department of Paediatrics at Baragwanath Hospital, a position she retained until her appointment to the newly established Stella and Paul Lowenstein Chair of Community Paediatrics in 1978. She was the first person in South Africa to hold a chair in that discipline.

Despite the heavy academic duties associated with developing the Division of Community Paediatrics, Professor Wagstaff has played a central role in a number of extramural activities aimed at improving health care delivery to under-resourced and disadvantaged communities in South Africa and the neighbouring countries. After the 1976 Soweto uprising, Professor Wagstaff asked to be seconded to the Soweto Community Clinics. It was here that she, together with a few other staff, developed a highly successful training programme for the upgrading of nursing staff to act as primary health care providers. The concept of primary health care nurses being the backbone of primary health care delivery in South Africa has been accepted by the national government as the way to ensure accessible health care for the previously under-served communities in South Africa. It is partially because of this programme that the infant mortality rate in Soweto has fallen markedly over the years, and the demand for paediatric outpatient services at Baragwanath Hospital has been halved. Many of the concepts for this approach were developed and formulated during her voluntary weekend involvement in a programme with Professor Barbara Robertson and Professor Patrick Mokhobo to improve health care in the then Bophuthatswana.

Following the formal acceptance of the training programme by the Transvaal Provincial Health Department and the establishment of a permanent training team, Professor Wagstaff remained in touch with many of the nursing staff in the Soweto clinics as their friend, mentor and confidant. More recently, Professor Wagstaff was instrumental in developing a pilot project in the Chiawelo Clinic to train and employ community health workers to take over many of the outreach functions of qualified nursing personnel in the community. The success of this programme has prompted the Metropolitan Council to take over the employment of the community health workers who have become integrated members of the health care team.

During the 1970s and 1980s, Professor Wagstaff was also instrumental in starting a programme to upgrade child minder services in Soweto. From 1978-1988 she was medical co-ordinator of the Anglo American Flying Medical Specialist service to Swaziland. During weekend visits volunteers consulted and operated in Mbabane and Hlatikulu. In recognition of her invaluable service to children in underserved areas, Professor Wagstaff was awarded the H F Oppenheimer Trophy for meritorious service in the field of Paediatrics. In 1996, she was asked to revive the programme with modifications, and this has now been developed as the

## O'Dowd Outreach Project.

In 1981, Professor Wagstaff was awarded the Merit Award of the Rotary Club of Johannesburg East in recognition of her work. She is also closely associated with the Soweto Youth Group which is involved in child abuse awareness and prevention activities, peer education and Child to Child programmes.

During her twenty years as professor of Community Paediatrics she has done much to promote the subspeciality in South Africa. She is co-editor (together with Professor Maurice Kibel at the University of Cape Town) of *Child Health for All*, the recognised textbook for students in the discipline, two editions of which have been published. She assisted Professor Francois De Villiers in establishing the part-time MSc in Child Health at this university and she introduced Community Paediatrics as part of the syllabus for fourth and sixth year medical students.

Throughout her career Professor Wagstaff has been involved in numerous extramural activities aimed at improving the general health and well-being of underprivileged communities. Her activities have earned her the respect of the communities in which she has worked and both local and international recognition.

It is with great pride and pleasure that the university confers upon Lucy Anne Wagstaff the degree of Doctor of Science in Medicine *honoris causa*.