



ELSEVIER

www.sciencedirect.com
www.rbmonline.com



OBITUARY

Professor Robert Jansen



It is with great sadness that the international community of reproductive medicine was advised on the weekend of July 12, 2014 of the passing of Robert (Rob) Jansen, Clinical Professor of Obstetrics, Gynaecology and Neonatology, Central Clinical School, Faculty of Medicine, University of Sydney. He was a world leader of reproductive medicine with a very strong de-

termination to drive research in the most innovative way for the benefit of his patients in their quest for healthy family formation. He was recognized for his diagnostic and surgical skills at an early stage of his career, and his abilities to recognize the opportunity to enhance the success of clinical therapies across the spectrum of reproductive disorders. Rob had deep interest in all aspects of ovarian function and focused on the enigmatic condition of pelvic endometriosis. He spent time at the University of Texas, San Antonio where he developed a lasting research interest on the human Fallopian tube. Some of this translated into improved laparoscopic surgical methods for tubal reconstruction, the minimization of pelvic adhesions and the idea of the preferred placement of embryos into the Fallopian tube via a trans-cervical catheter system. In 1985 he founded Sydney IVF Pty Ltd, a private clinical service, with his close clinical associate Jock Anderson and with Alan Trounson as scientific director. Rob was Executive Chairman of Sydney IVF 1984–1991. He oversaw improved IVF laboratory systems; notably superior culture media along with solid-state MINC incubators and blastocyst biopsy for PGD and PGS. These advances established Sydney IVF as arguably the pre-eminent IVF clinic in Australia. His overwhelming passion was excellence in medicine and responsible ethics for critical patient needs. He had a major role on the National Health and Medical Council Ethics Committee in the early days of IVF development and was responsible for establishing the Reproductive Endocrinology and Infertility Specialty within the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetrics and Gynaecology. He also chaired the Certification in Reproductive Endocrinology and Infertility subspecialty for many years to ensure the quality of

specialists in Australian reproductive practice. His philosophy for human medical ethics was embodied as: “An embryo is not an end in itself. It is a means to an end.” (Jansen, Sydney Morning Herald April 16, 2011).

Sydney IVF (now Genea Pty Ltd) became the gold standard for quality services in IVF and assisted conception in Australia, with strong success rates, new approaches and challenging developments. The provision of sex selection for family gender balancing was among the most socially innovative of the new methods despite its controversial status. Rob Jansen also encouraged the move of Genea into NHMRC-approved embryonic stem cell research, including attempts to produce somatic cell nuclear transfer stem cells. The company remains the most innovative and interesting in the Australian reproductive medicine landscape because of Jansen’s strong motivation to develop technologies, devices and reagents to ensure the best possible outcomes for his patients.

He was the chair of the very successful World Congress of Human IVF and Reproductive Genetics in 1999 in Sydney that provided a unique opportunity for the world of reproductive medicine to present a premier event in Australia. Jansen was an educator who taught at Sydney University, mentored many colleagues and encouraged a generation of medical students to be interested in reproductive medicine. He was frequently sought to present his work at international symposia and conferences and was recognized as a leader of substance and integrity. Despite retiring 3 years ago and battling illness, Rob always responded to teaching opportunities. This was exemplified by the delivery of the Dan O’Connor keynote address of the Australian Gynaecological Endoscopy Society (AGES) in March 2014. Despite being confined to a wheelchair, Rob gave a presentation that was delivered with great energy and, deservedly, he received a standing ovation – although the man who characteristically minimized his struggles was visibly embarrassed by this accolade, a clear reflection of his humility.

Rob Jansen grew up on the Sydney beaches, where he was an avid sailor who was at home on his magnificent yacht. He stepped down from his beloved Sydney IVF/Genea to sail the world with his dearly loved wife Diana. Despite the illness which he battled over the last year or so, Rob died overseas

during this pursuit. His legacy will be the sustaining quality of the practice of human reproductive medicine, where the health and well-being of patient and partner are the primary beneficiaries rather than other influences. Rob is survived by his wife Diana and children Wendy, Alice, Peter and Christopher.

Vale, Robert Jansen.

Alan Trounson

E-mail address: alan.trounson@gmail.com

John Yovich

E-mail address: jlyovich@pivet.com.au