

A Brief History of the Faculty of Pharmacy at Rhodes University

John Haigh, Izzy Kanfer and Leon Purdon

Academy of Pharmaceutical Sciences

Rhodes University has offered degree courses in Pharmacy since 1957, when the first head of the Department of Pharmacy, Professor CH Price, began with three second year students in a borrowed laboratory. The first year of the course comprised chemistry, physics, botany and zoology. Rhodes University was the second University in South Africa to offer a degree in pharmacy.

Courses began in what was then the Chemistry Honours Laboratory, a small, prefabricated building opposite the site of the present University Library. Lectures in professional subjects were delivered by

Professor Price, chemistry courses were taken in the Department of Chemistry and a medical doctor, Dr Daisy Junor, wife of the headmaster of Graeme College, taught physiology and pharmacology. The single laboratory had to suffice for all subjects, and the kindness of local pharmacists enabled the department to acquire enough apparatus and materials to provide a practical course.

In 1958, the first three students, Don Allen (who was the first pharmacy graduate because of his alphabetical advantage), Paul Leach and Joy Spruit entered final year, while the new intake into second year increased considerably to twelve. The staff was augmented by two more lecturers, Bruce Reynolds, who taught the pharmacology course and Louis Alberts, who was seconded from the Department of Zoology to teach the physiology course. Lectures were delivered in the Botany and Chemistry lecture theatres and one of the laboratories in the Department of Botany was used as the pharmacognosy laboratory.

Sylvia Spenceley (nee Hurdle) was appointed a temporary lecturer in 1959, staying for a few years to teach the microbiology component of the course. She returned in 1965 as a leave replacement for one year. George Roberts, Head of Pharmacy at the Cape Technical College joined the staff as a Senior Lecturer in 1960. As a result of increasing student numbers, the Department moved into a larger building previously occupied by the Department of Zoology and was where the Physics Department now stands.

In 1962, when the Honours course in Pharmacy was introduced, a laboratory and two

offices were made available in the Drostdy Barracks. Another prefabricated building was erected on the site where the Arts Major lecture theatre now stands for use as a dispensary and an additional room in the new Physics block was equipped for pharmacognosy practicals. This room also served as a lecture theatre.

Errol Kaplan was appointed to the permanent staff in 1963 to teach pharmaceutical chemistry. The following year, Len Paton and Lambe Parolis were appointed temporary lecturers. In order to accommodate the additional staff members, several offices were made available in Woodbourne House, which had previously housed the Department of Music and was situated where the Biological Sciences building now stands.

In 1965, Lambe Parolis left to join the Department of Chemistry as a lecturer, and in 1967, the head of the Department of Pharmacy at the Port Elizabeth Technical College, Terry McCarthy, was appointed as a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Pharmacy.

By 1967, accommodation had become a major problem. This was solved when the Wool Research Institute moved to Port Elizabeth and the Department of Pharmacy took over the Institute's extensive premises. In 1969, after serving as a graduate assistant for a year, Izzy Kanfer was appointed to a lectureship and, in 1970, the Pharmacy curriculum underwent a major revision, involving the extension of the academic course to four years, with a one-year apprenticeship at the end of the academic course. This resulted in considerable inconvenience to the lecturing staff, who had to run two different courses concurrently until 1974, when the three-year course was finally phased out. At this time the title of the degree was changed from Bachelor of Science in Pharmacy (BSc (Pharm)), to Bachelor of Pharmacy (BPharm), and the BSc (Honours) degree in Pharmacy was phased out.

Natie Finkelstein and Sirion Robertson joined the staff in 1971. Natie Finkelstein



The original Pharmaceutical Chemistry Laboratory in about 1963



The original Dispensary around 1965

left in 1980 to head the Pharmacy Department at the Cape Technicon. In 1972, Beverley Wilson, from the University of Dalhousie (Canada), was appointed. In the same year, the Department of Pharmacy was renamed the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences and in 1975 was again renamed the School of Pharmaceutical Sciences. In 1973 John Haigh (who is now Professor and Head of the Division of Pharmaceutical Chemistry) was appointed to a lectureship. In 1974 Julia Sanderoff joined the staff and that same year, after a short retirement, Professor Price died. During this period George Roberts was appointed Acting Head of the Department.

By 1972 more space was required and a new three storey building was erected consisting of five laboratories, a lecture theatre and research facilities. The Fine Art Department presently occupies this building.

A new Head of the Department, Professor Egil Ramstad, formerly of Purdue University, USA, who had spent several years at the School of Pharmacy at the University of Ife, Nigeria, was appointed in 1975. Prior to his appointment he spent a year at Rhodes as a visiting researcher in the Department.

Ben Potgieter, from the University of Potchefstroom joined the staff as Professor of Pharmacology in 1976 and Raj Naidoo was appointed to a lectureship in the same year. Also in 1976, Leon Purdon, our longest serving support staff member was appointed. In 1978, Lambe Parolis rejoined the staff as Professor of Pharmaceutical Chemistry and, at the end of that year, Egil Ramstad retired. In 1979 Ben Potgieter took over as Head of the School, a post he held until 1982 and he retired in 2000.

Until 1979 the School of Pharmaceutical Sciences had been part of the Faculty of Science. At this time Pharmacy students numbered some 60 percent of all Science Faculty students. This and the different professional attitudes taken towards pharmacy students, led to the formation, in 1980, of the Faculty of Pharmacy, the first in South Africa, with Ben Potgieter as the first Dean.

Two new staff members, Gerrit Fourie (previously the Vice-Chancellor's Liaison Officer) and Marthie Hendry joined the staff in 1980 and a Chair of Pharmaceutics was established, with Izzy Kanfer appointed as the first incumbent.

In 1982 the continued growth of the Fac-

ulty caused severe space constraints once again. This resulted in the splitting of the Pharmaceutical Chemistry section, which was accommodated in what used to be the Chemistry Building. One complete floor of this building was occupied for teaching and research, with several staff offices on other floors. This same year saw the retirement of Professor George Roberts who died in 2004 at the Brookshaw Home in Grahamstown.

The following year, Lambe Parolis took over as Head and Dean of the Faculty. Nell Sparrow joined the Faculty as a research officer. Ann Kench, Julian Grundy and Billy Futter (now Head of the Division of Pharmacy Administration and Practice) were appointed to lectureships in 1984 and Eric Meyer, who had been a temporary lecturer since 1981, was appointed to the full-time staff in 1985. Also in that year, Reza Fassihi and Ros Dowse increased the academic staff complement to fifteen permanent members. Reza Fassihi left in 1988 to head the Pharmacy Department at the University of Witwatersrand.

In 1987 the Biopharmaceutics Research Institute was established as a result of collaborative research between Lennon Laboratories Ltd (now Aspen-Pharmacare) and the Faculty of Pharmacy. The Institute provides a facility with the necessary equipment and expertise to assess new formulations of various drug products destined for both the local and overseas markets. The Director of the Institute is Izzy Kanfer and in 1988 the staff were Eva Mogilnicka, Michel Konings and Kathy Holton. Presently Izzy Kanfer is still the Director and the current staff are Mike Skinner, Sheena Emslie, Kay Wentworth and Karen Fabricius.

During 1987 an additional floor was added to the Chemistry/Pharmacy building and Pharmacy moved from "the hill" to the central campus to occupy three floors of this building. The time spent on the hill was a period of exclusivity for the Faculty as we were far re-

moved from the central campus and completely self contained, even to the extent of having our own satellite library, which facility we still retain.

In 1988, Mike Davies-Coleman was appointed to a lectureship in Pharmaceutical Chemistry and is now a Professor in the



The second home of Pharmacy

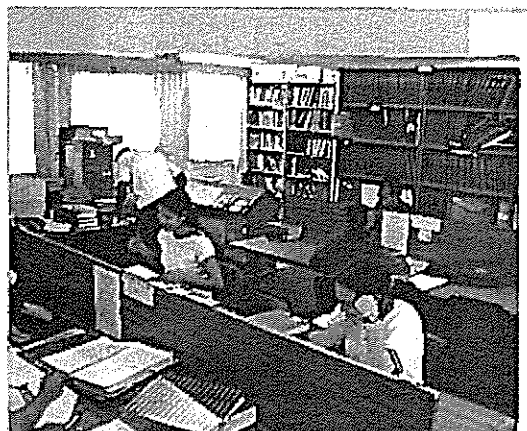


The present home of Pharmacy



Laboratories in the present building

Chemistry Department at Rhodes. In 1989 Eric Smith was appointed to a lectureship in Pharmaceutics and is now a Professor in South Carolina, USA. In 1990, Tina Ehlers was appointed to a lectureship in Pharmacy Administration and Practice. From 1992 to 1999, Beverley Wilson was the Dean of the Faculty. In 1994, Beverley Glass was appointed to a lectureship in Pharmaceutical Chemistry and is now lecturing in Townsville, Australia.



Part of our extensive library

In 1996, Rod Walker was appointed to a lectureship in Pharmaceutics and is now Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Pharmacy. In 1997, Ruth Leslie and Sue Burton were appointed. In 1998 Lambe Parolis retired and in 1999 Izzy Kanfer was appointed Head and Dean of the Faculty. In 1999, Santy Daya was appointed to an Associate Professorship in Pharmacology and is now Professor and Head of the Division. In 2000, Margaret von Zeil joined the staff but left to return to Cape Town before the end of the year.

In 2001, Denzil Beukes, Lucy Eshun-Wilson and Carmen Oltmann were appointed to lectureships. In 2002 Shabir Banoo was appointed to an Associate Professorship and Catherine Karekezi to a Senior Lectureship. Also in 2002, Helen Jali-Lubanga joined us but left at the end of the year to take up a Government post. In 2003 Wendy Wrench was appointed to a lectureship and is in charge of the experiential programme and Sunitha Srinivas was appointed to an Associate Professorship in Pharmacy Administration and Practice. At the end of 2003, Beverley Wilson retired and in 2004, Michael Naidoo was appointed as a Senior Lecturer in Pharmacology. The Faculty of Pharmacy has become one of the largest departments at Rhodes University. The Faculty has its own well-stocked library,

which includes the most comprehensive range of all the important international pharmaceutical journals to be found in South Africa. The Faculty was the first institution in South Africa to acquire the IOWA Drug Information System, which is complete since its inception in 1965, bringing total subscription costs for periodicals to approximately R200 000 a year.

The Faculty now boasts the most modern and sophisticated equipment for both teaching and research, including its own computer systems; high resolution ultraviolet and infrared spectrometers; atomic absorption and fluorescence spectrophotometers; gas and high performance liquid chromatographs; gamma and liquid scintillation counters and various additional pieces of modern equipment equal to, and in some cases better than that in many of the prestigious Schools of Pharmacy elsewhere in the world. Particular emphasis has been placed on high performance liquid chromatograph, where several systems, including a large range of detectors are in constant use.

Members of the teaching staff are actively involved in various areas of research and this has resulted in a steady stream of papers published in local and international journals. The research effort of the Faculty continues to play a prominent role in the proceedings of the annual meetings of the Academy of Pharmaceutical Sciences and the Pharmacological Society of South Africa. The Faculty regularly hosts local conferences and recently hosted the International Life Long Learning in Pharmacy conference. This was the first time this conference had been held outside Europe. In addition, members of the academic staff regularly participate in international conferences. For example, during 2003, four staff members made seven presentations at the International Pharmaceutical Federation conference held in Sydney, Australia. Many staff are performing collaborative research projects with colleagues in the USA, Great Britain, France, Switzerland, Canada and India.

International recognition has been achieved in the fields of structural elucidation and characterisation of the capsular polysaccharides of various bacteria; analysis of drugs in biological fluids and dosage forms using high performance liquid chromatography, including bio-availability and pharmacokinetic studies;

formulation development; health literacy and pictogram research; the biomedical potential of South African marine microorganisms; neuro-protection; cost effectiveness and efficacy of therapy in the management of various diseases; drug metabolism; assessment of topical corticosteroid activity in ointment, cream and lotion formulations; transdermal drug delivery; interactions between anti-depressive agents and pineal enzymes; protein-drug interactions and binding measurements; antiretrovirals; drug supply management; drug information; pharmacy education; adherence to therapy; promotion of rational drug use.

Over the years strong links have been forged with the Pharmaceutical Industry, where contractual projects involving bio-availability studies, analytical method development and numerous other industrial problems are undertaken. The Faculty has had tremendous support for many years from the local drug companies Glaxo and Roche who sponsor functions for our staff and students. We have also been supported by a number of other drug companies with bursaries and donations.

At present the Faculty runs a very successful community experience programme which involves our fourth year students in working in the Grahamstown Township at the various clinics there. The drug company Wyeth donated a minibus to ensure the smooth running of this programme.

The Faculty introduced the first (and only) PharmD programme in South Africa in 2004. The first group of three students recently registered for this degree.

Since the inception of Pharmacy at Rhodes until the end of 2003, just over 2000 students have graduated with the Bachelors degree, 31 with the honours degree, 61 with the Masters degree and 23 with the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

The running of the teaching and research efforts is highly dependent on the complement of support staff. At present there are two Chief Technical Officers, Dave Morley (Training and Laboratory Administration) and Tich Samkanga (Electronics); two Principal Technical Officers, Leon Purdon (General Administration) and Sally Morley (Pharmacology and Pharmacy Administration and Practice); a Senior Technical Officer, Colin Nontyi (Pharmaceutics); an Administrative Assistant, Maureen Bowles; two secretaries, Linda Emslie and Phiwe Zawula and a Librarian, Jeanette Coupé. □