
HONORARY DEGREE

Peter Folb

DSc (Medicine) (honoris causa)

Peter Folb established the discipline of Clinical Pharmacology in South Africa and is recognised as a leading authority internationally on the scientific basis of drug development. He is considered a world leader in drug regulation and served as Chair of the South African Medicines Control Council for 18 years, bringing it to a position where it was the World Health Organisation reference and training centre for drug regulation in the developing world.

Peter Folb's internationally recognised research in drug safety is reflected in the series of books and chapters in books that he has written and his contribution for nearly 20 years as co-editor of Meyler's Side Effects of Drugs, the definitive and authoritative international text on clinical, pathogenetic and experimental aspects of drug safety. He initiated boundary-breaking research on medicinal plants in South Africa, the importance of which was recognised by the creation of the South African MRC Traditional Medicines Research Unit in 1997.

Folb has contributed significantly to reducing the burden of malaria and other neglected and poverty-related diseases. He directed the basic and applied research into, and development of, a novel anti-malarial drug, rectal artesunate. Its use as pre-referral treatment of life-threatening severe malaria has been shown to reduce the mortality from malaria in infants and children in malaria endemic countries.

In 1977 the death of Steve Biko while in police detention generated considerable professional and public ethical discussion, as there were clear ethical breaches on the part of the doctors who were responsible for him. Peter Folb, along with three other professors, pursued disciplinary action against the doctors. This case played an important role in sensitising the medical profession to medical ethical issues in South Africa.

He went on to lead the investigation of the Apartheid government's chemical and biological warfare programme for the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Peter Folb has contributed to the advancement of science, technological innovation and the generation of new knowledge over a period of more than 30 years. In addition to applying his skills and knowledge to improve public health in developing countries, he has facilitated social justice and redress and has ensured that these programmes are sustained through extensive capacity building and health systems strengthening. He is an outstanding scientist and visionary leader.