

Obituary

Yackoob Kassim Seedat (7 February 1934 - 2 January 2026)



Emeritus Professor Yackoob Kassim Seedat, a renowned hypertensiologist and nephrologist, distinguished academic and eminent clinician, impactful educator and mentor, passed away on 2 January 2026 in Durban. He taught generations of undergraduates and postgraduates, emphasising top-notch, empathetic patient care and excellence. Their careers were shaped by his popular lectures and tutorials (standing-room only at many of these, with everyone prioritising attendance at his teaching sessions). He mentored many colleagues, whose careers flourished locally and abroad.

YK (as he was known to friends and colleagues) Seedat was born in 1934 in Durban. His father, Dr K M Seedat, one of the first medical practitioners of Indian origin in South Africa (SA), was a general practitioner in Durban from 1930 to 1974. YK attended St Anthony's School and Sastri College in Durban, matriculating in 1949. Because of the apartheid system, it was almost impossible at the time for black South Africans to be admitted to any of the medical schools in SA. He commenced his studies at the University of the Witwatersrand in 1950, but because of the political climate in SA, he left after a few months for Dublin, Ireland, where he graduated with an MB BCh BAO from University College, Dublin (National University of Ireland) in 1956. This was followed by an internship in medicine and surgery at Jervis Street Hospital, Dublin.

He returned to SA as a qualified doctor, and undertook postgraduate training in internal medicine at King Edward VIII Hospital in Durban and at the University of Natal, obtaining his Fellowship in Medicine (FCP (SA)) from the College of Physicians, Surgeons and Gynaecologists of SA in 1962.

As a practising clinician in the apartheid era, YK had to endure the indignities associated with being a 'non-white' doctor working in the state sector, such as receiving a salary significantly lower than that of his white trainees, and being unable to work in 'white' hospitals or wards. In the 1960s, he received ~60% of the salary of the white registrars he trained. After having obtained his fellowship of the Colleges of Medicine of SA (CMSA) in 1962, he was promoted to consultant, but was paid the salary of a medical officer.

In 1967 he went to the UK, where he trained in renal medicine under Sir Douglas Black, a renowned British nephrologist and pioneer in the field, at the Royal Infirmary, Manchester. He completed his MRCP (London), and MD on renal tubular acidosis, which was presented to the National University of Ireland in 1967. On his return to SA, he rejoined the staff at the King Edward VIII Hospital. He was not permitted to work in the renal unit at Addington Hospital in Durban for several years, because under apartheid he could not give instructions to white nurses. The renal unit where chronic dialysis was undertaken was in a whites-only hospital, was available for white patients only and staffed by white doctors.

With the emigration of many white specialists from SA in the late 1970s, the Director of Hospital Services in Natal approached him to head the nephrology unit at Addington Hospital, as it was no longer functional. He agreed to do this on condition that the unit would treat all patients irrespective of race; that doctors and nurses could work there irrespective of race; and that white patients would be treated by doctors and nurses of all races. This was agreed to by the authorities, and he started what was the first non-racial nephrology unit in SA in 1977, a non-racial 'island' in a white institution.

Prof. Seedat was professor and Head of Medicine and Nephrology at the University of Natal from 1979 until 1994, when he retired. He established a highly successful

postgraduate training programme in internal medicine at a time when the university's main focus was on undergraduate training. He recruited young doctors to nephrology training, started the continuous ambulatory peritoneal dialysis (CAPD) programme and helped establish the transplant programme in the region. He trained many physicians in SA in internal medicine and its various specialties, including nephrology. Many of those he trained are now leaders in the profession, both in SA and abroad.

When he retired as head of department, he was appointed Professor of Medicine (Research) from 1995 to 2000. In his final years, he was Professor Emeritus in the Division of Nephrology and Hypertension, and Kidney and Hypertension Research Unit, at the Nelson R Mandela School of Medicine, Faculty of Health Sciences, University KwaZulu-Natal, Durban.

He was internationally recognised for his achievements in hypertension prevention and control in sub-Saharan Africa. His research in hypertension included epidemiology, clinical aspects and treatment; in addition, he was involved in research into aspects of renal medicine (including glomerulonephritis, renal failure and dialysis) and coronary artery disease. He made seminal findings in his research on hypertension. Hypertension is more common in black people living in sub-Saharan Africa than any other racial group, worsened by excessive salt intake, obesity in middle-aged black Africans, and stress. It is a key cause of strokes, heart failure and kidney failure in the region. Over 30% of the population in SA has hypertension. He published multiple editions of the SA hypertension practice guidelines over several years, the last being the sixth in 2014. The World Hypertension League (WHL) recognised his work with the Notable Achievement Award for 'Notable achievement in hypertension reduction at the population level' in 2015. His contribution was published in the *Journal of Clinical Hypertension*, where he was congratulated for his and SA's world-leading programme to reduce dietary salt.

Prof. Seedat published >450 articles on nephrology, hypertension and general medicine, contributed >40 chapters in text books and presented >350 papers at international and national congresses. He was a reviewer for several journals, including

the *Journal of Human Hypertension*, *British Medical Journal*, *Lancet*, *Nephron* and *Journal of Hypertension*. He was a fellow of 12 Colleges of Medicine, including the FRCP (London), FRCP (Irel.), FRS (SA), FACP, FACC, Hon FCM (SA) (1998), FCP (SA), FCCP, FCPS (PAK), FICA and Fellow of the University of Natal. He was also awarded two honorary doctorates: a PhD (Med Sci) from the University of Durban Westville (May 1991), and an MD from the University of the Free State (February 2004); and the FRSSAf (1995).

He belonged to several scientific societies: life member of the British Medical Association, the SA Medical Association (SAMA), the International Society of Hypertension, the International Society of Nephrology (ISN) and the Southern African Society of Hypertension. He was one of the founding members of the Southern African Society of Hypertension, and served in various capacities over several decades, lending wisdom and gravitas to the organisation. He was a past president of SAMA, the Southern African Hypertension Society and the SA Renal Society. He was the vice-chair of the KwaZulu-Natal Kidney Association for many decades.

He received numerous awards during a distinguished career, including the State President's Order for Meritorious Service (Silver) (August 1990); the Silver Award for Research and Teaching, Medical Association of SA (June 1994); the Life

Achievement Award from the International Forum for Hypertension in Africa (1998); Officer of the Order of St John of Jerusalem (May 1995); the SAMA Gold Medal Award for leadership and outstanding contribution in the field of medicine (November 2003); and an Illuminated Citation Golden Jubilee Award from the Colleges of Medicine of SA (December 2005). He was awarded an ISN Pioneer Award for Africa in May 2014, the first recipient of this award in Africa. These awards honour the 'unsung heroes' of nephrology on a regional level, who have engaged in extraordinary efforts to advance nephrology in a specific country or region.

In August 2014, he was awarded the International Society of Hypertension Developing World Award for his contribution to medicine, and especially in recognition of his research in the field of hypertension in Africa, and in March 2015 he received an award from the World League of Hypertension for the control of hypertension in Africa. In 2017, a new hall of the CMSA building in Durban was named after him, recognising his role in the growth of the CMSA in KwaZulu-Natal. Prof. Seedat was appointed to the CMSA Council in 1978, was an executive council member from 1992 to 2002, and chairman of the Faculty of Physicians between 1992 and 1995. He donated a house in Glastonbury Place in Durban to the CMSA, who used it for administration purposes from 1995 to 2016.

His legacy will live on in the many clinicians, researchers and academics he

mentored. He will be greatly missed by his family, friends, colleagues and former students, who will remember him as a loving husband, father and grandfather, and as a friend, teacher and mentor. We extend our deepest condolences to Zuleka, his devoted wife and partner of nearly 60 years, his sons Prof. Riaz Seedat and Dr Ziad Seedat, his daughters-in-law Nazrien and Sumaya, and his grandchildren Nabeel, Ismaeel, Mikayla and Samir.

Saraladevi Naicker

Emeritus Professor of Medicine, School of Clinical Medicine, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa
saraladevi.naicker@wits.ac.za

Indiran P Naiker

Former principal specialist and senior lecturer in the Department of Medicine and Division of Nephrology, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa

Yosuf Veriava

Emeritus Professor of Medicine, School of Clinical Medicine, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

Malegapuru William Makgoba

Former Vice-Chancellor and Principal, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa; former National Health Ombud; former president of the South African Medical Research Association