

OBITUARY

**DR WILLIAM DAVID (BILL) PROUDMAN AO MBBS FRCS FRACS
GENERAL SURGEON
20 JANUARY 1928 - 16 FEBRUARY 2021**

Born in Adelaide in 1928, Bill was foremost among surgeons in South Australia and a highly valued mentor to many students and surgeons throughout his career. He was truly a general surgeon, able to operate in many areas that are now separated into sub-specialties. He contributed greatly to his profession, the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons and the community.

After attending Glenelg Primary School and St Peter's College, Bill graduated from medicine at the University of Adelaide in 1951. Shortly afterwards he travelled to the United Kingdom where after several years, he became a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons of England. He returned to Adelaide in 1958 where he became a Fellow of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons after further training.

When The Queen Elizabeth Hospital (TQEH) opened in 1959, he was appointed the first Senior Registrar in the Department of Surgery. He subsequently joined the ranks of the Honorary Consultant staff, where he became one of the specialists who provided clinical services and graduate and undergraduate teaching on a voluntary basis. This practice continued for another ten years until the excessive demands on clinicians were recognised and payment was introduced.

In 1965, together with Dr Peter Knight, Bill performed the first successful, live donor, renal transplant procedure in Australia. It was performed at TQEH with Bill removing the kidney from the donor. The actual procedure proved hazardous with the discovery of a vascular anomaly, but ultimately resulted in the delivery of a viable donor kidney.

The use of a live donor was highly controversial at the time and Bill played a leading role in gaining the approval of the Ethics Committee to perform the procedure. In the early 1960s, the Surgical Transplant Team spent many sessions in the Animal House at TQEH developing and honing their skills in renal transplant surgery. Immunosuppressive medication was in its infancy and Bill was closely involved in the planning and establishment of protocols for every aspect of the renal transplant process. He continued to play a leadership role in obtaining renal transplants from many live and deceased donors over many years.

Bill was a highly skilled surgeon and one of the key innovators in the development of parathyroid surgery in Adelaide in the 1970s. He authored scientific papers on thyroid and parathyroid surgery. He performed the first insertion of an Austin-Moore prosthesis in a patient with a fractured hip at TQEH, illustrating his ability to operate in a broad range of areas.

Bill remained in South Australia, providing a lifetime of surgical service and education to aspiring young surgeons. His extraordinary knowledge, clinical skills and judgement were highly sought after and valued by generations of students and colleagues. "Proudman's Rules of Surgery" are still quoted.

In addition to surgical matters, he had an outstanding knowledge of the basic surgical sciences (histopathology, anatomy and physiology) and rare medical conditions which he eagerly debated with his colleagues in their own fields of expertise. Such was his passion for knowledge and education.

A highly popular legacy was the legendary "Lumps and Bumps" clinical teaching sessions which he established on Saturday mornings at TQEH. Loyal patients with a wide range of conditions would proudly volunteer to be poked and prodded by the surgical novices.

Bill was a major contributor to the lifeblood of a rich educational and clinical surgical service at TQEH for 35 years. Wherever he worked, hospital staff and his patients remember him well with respect and affection. Almost every surgeon trained in Adelaide at the time would have come under his influence. Nurses remember him as a dashing young surgeon who was a pleasure to work with in the operating theatre. His patients remember his warmth, understanding and empathy.

Bill was also instrumental in the establishment of Western Community Hospital. His drive and support were important in providing the impetus for the hospital to change site and be rebuilt, to provide an improved service to the western suburbs of Adelaide. He was on the medical advisory committee of the hospital for many years.

He had a highly successful private practice and provided a surgical service to the rural Kapunda Hospital. He went well beyond the contribution usually expected of a consultant surgeon, making his consulting rooms available for use, at no charge, to young consultants starting out in private practice.

He served the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons as an examiner for 8 years during which he became a Deputy Chair of the Court of Examiners, a position which indicates the respect and esteem in which he was held. He chaired the Court of Examiners in Hong Kong and led a College delegation to the Surgical Exams in Myanmar.

In 2017, he received the Order of Australia (AO) award for 'distinguished service to medicine as a physician and specialist in renal and transplant surgery, and to the profession as a clinician, mentor, researcher and innovator'. The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons awarded him the Sir Henry Newland Medal, for 'Distinguished Service and Recognition of Achievements'.

Bill is survived by his wife of 62 years, Esmé, and his three sons, David, Tim and Andrew and their families.

This obituary was provided by Mr Tim Proudman FRACS