

Dr Tania van Avendonk

1964 - 2018

Prof. Pierre MALLIA



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It is with great sorrow that one of our council members went to meet the Lord this year. Tania needs no introduction to us. She has been an avid worker outside her own general practice not only for the promotion of family medicine through her work in the council of the MCFD but also in other areas such as women's rights.

Tania was Treasurer of the College for a long time and managed the logistics. Indeed her work was revolutionary and done with great enthusiasm. She chased people to pay their dues and she was very fast to get quotes and book venues. Indeed we relied on her so much, that, as they say, she became conspicuous by her absence. Sometime you do not realise the value of the work put in by a person until they are not there any longer. Her work is now divided between another two enthusiastic members.

Tania did not shy away from discussions and indeed she pushed her argument very avidly. She was one of what I often refer to as the Titans of council – those whose word carry a lot of weight.

When news came about her illness a few years ago it goes without saying that we were all shocked. After a short while she returned on council. What do you say to a person who has just been diagnosed with an aggressive cancer? But she

solved this problem for us by her large smile. She fought the cancer tooth and nail and although she was realistic, as she used to say, she continued living in the present moment to the full. Her testimony was shown by the people attending her function. Indeed she donated her body for study by medical students – a very courageous thing to do.

Tania's demise not only reminds us that we all have to face death, and unfortunately, like her, it is more tragic when one dies young; but she reminded us how to continue to face death optimistically. Whilst some may have thought this was a form of denial, time certainly showed that it was not. It was in her character to live life fully to the end without external complaint. Of course our hearts go out to her family; her husband Frans, her son Jan and her daughter Tessa. I am sure that at home, her protected environment, things may have been more difficult. But certainly she was keen in helping them.

Tania was awarded the college Fellowship (which one only gets after completing at least five years of work to the MCFD) and a Certificate of Commendation by the Royal College of General Practitioners.

We shall all miss her but she left in our hearts an appreciation of how we ought to live enthusiastically.