

Citation for the award of Honorary Doctor of Medical Science Ivo Dominic Anthony Vellar

Ivo Dominic Vellar migrated with his family to Australia from Camporovere, in Northern Italy, in 1938. He matriculated with distinction from St Kevin's College, entered the Melbourne Medical School in 1952 and led the order of merit when he graduated, with honours in every subject, in 1957.

His brilliant career began in internal medicine at St Vincent's Hospital with a focus on the intensive care management of patients, where his great powers of observation and reasoning led him to develop the technique of intravenous cannulation of the subclavian vein for the rapid resuscitation of patients. However, he soon decided to pursue a career in surgery, training first at St Vincent's, then in the UK.

He returned to Melbourne as second assistant under Professor and Head of the St Vincent's University of Melbourne Department of Surgery, Richard Bennett, where he developed a reputation as an excellent clinician, technician and teacher of both under- and post-graduate students. His chosen field of general surgery was framed by his commitment to renal transplantation surgery, which he helped cement in the surgical repertoire of St Vincent's Hospital, and a lasting interest in parathyroid surgery, which laid the foundation for the development of endocrine surgery at St Vincent's Hospital.

Prompted by the high rate of intra-abdominal injuries, particularly of the liver, arising out of road traffic accidents, Ivo Vellar sought higher training in liver surgery at the Hammersmith Hospital, London, under the international figure of Professor Leslie Blumgart. He then focused the remainder of his surgical career on practicing in the field of hepato-pancreatico-biliary surgery and the creation of this as a specialty service at St Vincent's. The advent of advanced medical imaging with computed tomography scans and magnetic resonance imaging paved the way for Ivo Vellar's studies of the anatomy of the liver and associated organs that led to his MD in 1997. He also engaged with other specialty groups including gastroenterologists, radiologists and government to define the safe use of hepato-biliary surgery, manipulation and imaging, and produce a report to Government that changed the practice of laparoscopic biliary surgery dominating over biliary lithotripsy for the management of cholelithiasis.

In addition to his extremely busy surgical career, Ivo Vellar has been a prolific author, as a leading contributor to over 50 articles in the fields of vascular, endocrine and hepatobiliary surgery, and, as his abiding interest in medical history grew into an expertise on the history of St Vincent's Hospital and its surgeons, as the author of more than eight historical books. His treatise on the life of Sir Thomas Dunhill, the St Vincent's surgeon who pioneered thyroid surgery for the safe management of thyrotoxicosis, was acknowledged with a Master of Surgery from the University of Melbourne.

The book 'From Camporovere to Carlton. The story of five families.' reflects Ivo Vellar's pride in his Italian heritage. Similarly, his lifelong campaign against

racism is described in his book 'Adventures in two worlds'. His unashamed readiness to confront prejudice and injustice head-on was perhaps best articulated by a colleague who once described him as 'dangerous when provoked'. He has taken many roles with organisations linked with the Italian community in Melbourne, particularly in the area of aged care. He has been recognised with several honours from the Veneto region and with the award of 'Cavaliere of the Republic of Italy for services to medicine and to the Italian community'. Former Governor of Victoria, Sir James Gobbo, remarks on the pride that the Italian community in Melbourne has taken in Ivo Vellar's achievements, and the inspiration and encouragement he has provided.

Ivo Vellar continues to be a loyal and devoted member of St Vincent's Hospital and the University of Melbourne. He generously supports an annual oration, the Vellar Lecture, which attracts leading oncology surgeons to St Vincent's to share their expertise and knowledge with the wider community. He is widely held in high regard as a leading light of surgery whose significant personal influence in the teaching and practice of Australian surgery has paved the way for younger generations of surgeons to practice with reasoned judgment, a sound understanding of anatomy and a genuine interest in the welfare of patients.

Ivo Vellar is commended for the award of Doctor of Medical Science, in recognition of his unstinting devotion and commitment to surgery at its highest levels and his outstanding documentation of the historical development of surgery at one of this University's oldest clinical partners, St Vincent's Hospital.

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