

Citation for the award of Honorary Doctor of Medical Science Professor Emeritus Norman Beischer AO

A leading teacher, researcher and clinician for over 50 years, Professor Emeritus Norman Albert Beischer's determined advocacy for women's health has created enduring, measurable public health improvements for women, babies and children.

Educated in Bendigo, then at Geelong Grammar School, Professor Beischer graduated MBBS from the University of Melbourne in 1954. His early postgraduate years included training at the Alfred and Royal Children's Hospitals and at the Royal Women's Hospital, which became a twelve-year association with the Hospital's Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology under the mentorship of the late Professor Sir Lance Townsend.

In 1968, Professor Beischer was appointed inaugural Chair at the second University of Melbourne Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at the then newly established Mercy Maternity Hospital (later the Mercy Hospital for Women) and the Austin Hospital, a post he held for 28 years. The strength of the current department (now based in Heidelberg) is testament to his work in building the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology across the two sites.

The current standing of gestational diabetes mellitus as a major issue for not only the index pregnancy but also for future health is very much due to his enthusiastic and productive research at the Mercy Hospital into gestational diabetes mellitus and assessment of foetal well-being in the third trimester of pregnancy.

The author of over 180 peer-reviewed publications and Editor of the *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology* for 17 years, Professor Beischer has also edited a number of landmark undergraduate textbooks: 'Beischer and Mackay' became established authorities whose texts on obstetrics, gynaecology and neonatology ran to multiple editions and have been translated into three languages.

Following his retirement from the Chair of the University Department at the Mercy Hospital for Women, in 1995, Professor Beischer has remained active as Chair of the Medical Research Foundation for Women and Babies, which he established in 1981 as the Mercy Maternity Hospital Research Foundation. Providing support for clinical research by medical practitioners, nurses and scientists investigating diseases and conditions that affect women and/or babies, the Foundation has funded important research in areas from the prevention of diabetes mellitus in women who have had gestational diabetes to investigating surgical and non-surgical management of orthopaedic problems. The Foundation continues to be a strong supporter of research at the University of Melbourne.

Professor Beischer had served on the Consultative Council on Obstetric and Paediatric Morbidity and Mortality of Victoria (CCOPMM) for 15 years when, with the death of his mentor and Inaugural Chair, Professor Sir Lance Townsend, he took over as Chair in 1984. Over the next 15 years, until his retirement from CCOPMM in 1999, he was Chair of the Council and all of its subcommittees.

Through his tireless efforts and meticulous attention to detail, Professor Beischer ensured that CCOPMM became the gold standard for Australian reporting and analysis of maternal, perinatal, and child deaths. He oversaw the extension of

Council functions to include congenital malformations and deaths of children up to the age of 18 years and was the driving force behind the reporting of maternal deaths in Australia for 25 years. His successor to the Council Chair, Professor Jeremy Oats has said, 'Norman Beischer's considerable intellectual energy made both clinicians and policy makers aware of the need for vigilance and continued advancements in the quality of maternity care in order to maintain the high standards that Australians have come to expect'.

Professor Emeritus Norman Beischer's substantial contributions to the improvement of maternity care in both Victoria and Australia have also contributed greatly to the transformation of the public health landscape and the lives of countless women and their families across the world.

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