**CITATION: John MORLEY Pettifor**

Emeritus Professor John Pettifor was born on the 9th March 1945 in Keighley in Yorkshire. He was educated at St. John’s College Johannesburg and graduated with both his MBBCh (1968) and a PhD (Medicine) (1981) at the University of the Witwatersrand. Between these two degrees, he completed his Fellowship of the College of Medicine of South Africa in Paediatrics in 1972.

John Pettifor is one of the most distinguished researchers in the Faculty of Health Sciences but is also highly regarded as a teacher, clinician and administrator.

Following sterling academic achievements, John began his research career in 1974 as a researcher in the Metabolic Unit in the Department of Paediatrics at Chris Hani Baragwanath Academic Hospital in Soweto. The entity was awarded “Unit” status by the South African Medical Research Council in 1985 when John Pettifor also became Director of this unit, a position he held until his retirement in 2010.

Pettifor’s research was initially stimulated by the observation that children admitted to the hospital with rachitic-like bone deformities, were outside the typical age range of infants suffering from vitamin D deficiency. He found that the bone disease of these children, who were characteristically between 6 and 14 years of age, healed on a normal diet without the need to no add vitamin D. These subjects came exclusively from rural areas and in particular from the Driefontein community in the southeastern region of Mpumalanga and Swaziland. The initial work consisted of a two-pronged approach, first to investigate the biochemical and radiological changes that occurred in affected children, and then to investigate the prevalence and possible factors responsible for the development of this condition. His efforts also culminated in a primary health care facility being developed in the community. During that period, Pettifor was also involved with the Transvaal Rural Action Committee and the Legal Resources Centre in preventing the forced removal of the Driefontein community.

His subsequent studies of pediatric bone mass and the factors influencing it, was enhanced by the creation of the Birth to Twenty cohort in 1990. These studies were further supported by the development of appropriate techniques to measure bone mass not only accurately but also with limited radiation exposure. Pettifor was able study a Bone Health cohort through the drive and energy of Dr Shane Norris who was at that stage responsible for directing the Birth to Twenty cohort.

Pettifor has an impressive array of publications and awards. His research endeavours have covered the areas of infant and childhood nutrition, bone development and rickets. His career has resulted in some 43 chapters in books and well over 200 articles, most of which have appeared in international peer reviewed journals and several of these in high impact journals such as the New England Journal of Medicine. He has a significant “H” index of 40 and approximately 5000 citations.

John Pettifor has been awarded an “A” rating by the National Research Foundation on two occasions (2006; 2011) which signifies that he is unequivocally recognised by his peers as a leading international scholar. There are few “A” NRF rated scientists in the Health Sciences arena and Pettifor’s inclusion in this group testifies to his standing as a researcher both locally and internationally.

Pettifor has been acknowledged by his peers having been awarded the Nutrition Society’s Merit Award (1992) for his outstanding contribution to nutrition research in South Africa, the Dr C Gopalan Oration Gold Medal by the Nutrition Society of India, the Charles Slemenda Award from the International Conference on Children’s Bone Health in recognition of his contribution to children’s bone health, and a Career Award from the 15th International Workshop on Vitamin D in recognition of his contributions to vitamin D research. In addition, he was awarded the Silver Medal of the South African Medical Research Council (1997).

Professor Pettifor’s exceptional research career has been superimposed on his considerable duties as an academic and clinical Head (20 years) of the Department of Pediatrics and Child Health at Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital and the University of the Witwatersrand. During this period he actively supported and encouraged clinicians to undertake research as part of their clinical activities. Several pediatricians have obtained their PhDs while spending time with him in his MRC Research Unit, and he continues to supervise postgraduate students at both the Masters and doctoral levels.

Since his retirement he has been the Director of the Carnegie Clinical Fellows programme within the Faculty of Health Sciences, which aims to provide the opportunity for young clinicians just completing their subspecialty or specialty training to spend two years in full time research achieving their PhDs. He is looked upon in the Faculty as having enormous knowledge and wisdom and is sought out for advice and guidance

The many facets of the contributions made by Professor John Pettifor to research, to clinical training and service not only locally, but globally as well, makes him a worthy recipient of an honorary doctorate degree from the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.