*Reine Vandenberghe, Haasrode
Jan Depressed, Leuven*

In memoriam Prof. Dr. Kamiel Vandenberghe

So often he saw the first heartbeats
So often he discovered breath
even before there was air. And now this.

Silently he moves across,
His echo vibrating
in each of the lives he touched.

On December 16, 1997, a cardiac rupture suddenly and unfairly took Kamiel Vandenberghe away. In one moment, death destroyed what had been carefully and passionately built up in a lifetime. With sudden clarity, death also reveals the real, irreversible meaning of a person's life, showing that remaining pure substance which has been extracted from the core.

Those who had the privilege to meet Kamiel, knew him as a gentle man in both senses, a man with a natural charm, easy to talk to, quite unassuming, even if he was brilliant, a man who many of his colleagues will remember as an expert doctor and dedicated scientist, but most of all, a faithful friend. He was a quiet person, with great inner strength, who combined seriousness with a very private, slightly ironic, sense of humour. Never wanting to limit his fascination to strictly professional objects, he was a passionate reader. In his huge library subjects ranged from the specialized editions in his own field to works on philosophy, science, art, literary prose and poetry in the four languages he read.

In many ways, Kamiel Vandenberghe chose 'the road less taken'. His integrity was almost proverbial. The truth was never negotiable with him. He would support a just cause even at the price of his own interests. One of his cherished quotes was Thomas Mann's line 'A harmful truth is better than a useful lie'. In situations of personal conflict, in his amiable way, he always tried to reconcile rather than polarize parties.

His associates could always count on his thorough professional advice. Young collaborators appreciated the high level of training under his supervision, accepting that

he was demanding in matters of quality. A worthwhile fellow in the common adventure of research, he advocated the necessity of a clear distinction between experimental research and clinical activity. Colleagues enjoyed listening to his valuable contributions and acute remarks at scientific meetings.

In his commitment toward the double patient entrusted to him, he was technically extremely competent, aiming at perfection. Yet he always approached his patients with warm empathy, sympathizing with the decisive importance of accurate diagnosis and possible therapy. Sometimes the bearer of bad tidings, he knew how to communicate a gloomy diagnosis tactfully and with utmost sensitivity. Intent on bringing a message of hope, he would define a fair position between the mother's wishes

and the real prospect for a successful therapy. Patients always felt treated as peers, and were given ample information and time to make the decisions they could afterwards serenely call their own.

In ethical discussions, his contributions were reportedly substantial and always thoroughly considered. Indeed they testified to a deep moral attitude in matters that touch the fundamental questions in life and go beyond medicine. A tenacious believer in the ultimate advantage of life over death, he would, however, decline therapeutic obstinacy or any kind of fundamentalism based on merely platonic principle, arguing that 'without the long march through the facts, a moralist is a danger to his country'.

A devoted family man, Kamiel was a truly wonderful companion to his wife Reine and caring father to their teenage daughter Ina and two adult sons Luk and Joris. Here his death shatters the dream of a fulfilled and happy family.

Kamiel Vandenberghe achieved the best – as a human being, in medicine and in science. He will be sorely missed, both personally and professionally.

Address your sympathy to:

Mrs. Reine Vandenberghe
Bergenstraat 135
B-3053 Haasrode (Belgium)

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Kamiel Vandenberghe was born in Ypres, Belgium, in 1940 and first obtained a Bachelor of Letters and Philosophy Degree at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (KU Leuven 1961). He graduated 'cum laude' at the Medical Faculty of the KU Leuven in 1968. Having finished his obstetrics and gynaecology training in 1973, he left for subspecialty training in Vienna (A. Kratchowil), Glasgow (I. Donald), London (S. Campbell), Yale at New Haven (J. Hobbins) and Denver (J. Holmes).

Coming back to Belgium as a Consultant at the University Hospitals of Leuven, he pioneered ultrasound in obstetrics and gynaecology. Over time he gradually set up the first structured unit for fetal medicine in the country. He would later become head of the formal 'Department of Ultrasound, Antenatal Diagnosis and Fetal Medicine' and bring fetal medicine in his country to an international level. His clinical research interests were in fetal cardiology, intrauterine transfusion and fetal malformations. He was a permanent member of the Ethical Committee.

His academic and teaching commitments were Senior Lecturer (1984) and Associate Professor (1994). The latest research he supervised was the experimental programme on endoscopy in fetal medicine at the Centre for Surgical Technologies of the KU Leuven.

He was an active member of several ultrasound and fetal medicine societies. He was a Board Member of the European Federation of Societies of Ultrasound in Medicine (1984–1993), and a member of its Ultrasound Radiation Safety Committee (1990–1997). He initiated the Flemish Ultrasound Society (VENEB). He was President of the International Fetal Medicine and Surgery Society in 1993–1994. Kamiel Vandenberghe was a member of the Editorial Board of the *European Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology* and of *Fetal Diagnosis and Therapy*.