

In memoriam: Dr Richard Oleko passes on

Everyone who knew or met Richard will remember his jolliness, brilliance, allure, and dedication to making his country and the world a safe place, free of diseases that continue to maim humanity. In the medical fraternity, we reminisce his warmth and quick humor and his people-first approach as a humanitarian worker, and his pragmatism as public health physician and clinician.

We did not, and still don't, contest the fact that Richard was one of the great minds of our time. On the passing of Richard, his friend and colleague, Dr David Lukudu, paid tribute saying, "Richard was a thoughtful, lovely person. I learned so much from him, and we shared so much. I will miss him very much."

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Ole, as his friends would commonly call him, was born in Juba, South Sudan. He went on to study medicine at Grigore T. Popa University of Medicine and Pharmacy in Romania and a Master of Public Health at Makerere University in Uganda. Until his last assignment with the World Health Organization as Medical Officer responsible for tuberculosis control and prevention in Papua New Guinea, Richard was a benevolent worker. Richard's career trajectory exemplified leadership: he was logical and systematic in his thinking, willingly sharing ideas and information, and nurturing talent. Many of us found Richard of great intellect and big heart. He was an inspiration; a hardworking, focused and dedicated person who led by example. He was well known in his professional circle at both national and global levels, with many friends in South Sudan, East Africa and the world at large.

Dr Oleko was a whole-hearted and delightful person, one we will miss dearly. Our melancholy is lessened somewhat with the comforting thought that we had the privilege to know him. As the great American statesman and diplomat Adlai Ewing Stevenson commented, "it is not the years in a life that counts, it is the life in the years." Richard Oleko certainly lived. We will miss him and all the moments we had together at a personal and professional level.

Dr Richard Oleko died in Port Moresby, Papua New



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Guinea, on April 15, 2021. He leaves behind his beloved wife, Alimah, his children Tisha, Jason, Jaden, and Chloe. To Richard's family, we extend our deepest sympathy and prayers.

Adieu Dr Richard Oleko, we will keep the flag flying high.

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