Professor Roderick Samuel Fisher Campbell AM, MRCVS, FRCPath, FACVSc, FACTM
5 June 1924 - 22 March 2018

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A modest man, Rod Campbell was born in 1924 in Glasgow where he lived the first half of his life. Among other events, in 1942 he witnessed the bombing of Clydebank when he sneaked home for a weekend from the highland croft to which he’d been evacuated. He studied at the Glasgow Veterinary School and decided to become a pathologist rather than take up practice. “Of pathology,” he wrote, “you are drawn to the thrill of the chase, as every autopsy or biopsy is a forensic case where one uses the eye and logic to reach a conclusion about the nature and significance of the disease.”

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He became renowned at Glasgow University as a teacher, but research was his first love, and a sabbatical year in Khartoum in 1963 cemented his interest in the study of tropical diseases in animals. A tall man, his Sudanese colleagues referred to him as “the white Dinka”. Another teaching and research year at Purdue University in the United States in 1967 widened his international veterinary research networks.

In 1969 he was appointed a founding Professor of James Cook University of North Queensland – his job was to establish the Graduate School of Tropical Veterinary Science, and he emigrated to Townsville with his formidable wife Monica and family.

Professor Campbell quickly established a team which became world renowned as tropical veterinary post graduate teachers and researchers across Pathology, Parasitology, Virology, Bacteriology, Immunology, Animal Production and Epidemiology. In the early years research breakthroughs included the first vaccine in the world for the canine parvovirus. The School trained many International students, especially from SE Asia, and through these contacts built many beneficial linkages.

Rod Campbell and his team embarked on a veterinary capacity building program in Indonesia and other parts of South East Asia which was not only beneficial to those countries but also mitigated against regional outbreaks of diseases such as foot and mouth which could have decimated Australia’s export industry if they had spread south.
The establishment of the Balitvet project at the Indonesian Research Centre for Veterinary Sciences in Bogor in 1980 led to a decade long upgrade in Indonesian expertise. A combination of an Australian team and Indonesia staff modernized a research program which concentrated on common diseases to Indonesia and Australia in the fields of Pathology and Toxicology, Virology, Bacteriology and Epidemiology. This was coupled with an aggressive post graduate program of MScs and PhDs at Indonesian and Australian veterinary institutions.

Almost as soon as it was founded, Rod Campbell also helped lead the James Cook University’s charge to establish a medical school in Townville, lobbying a series of Governments from Whitlam’s onwards, and upgrading Townsville’s Anton Breinl Centre for Public Health to propel the case, until the Keating Government promised the new school in the 1996 Federal Election and the Howard Government matched the pledge.

Professor Campbell was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia in 1996 for Services to Primary Industry, as an international veterinary consultant and as the Founding Professor of the Graduate School. He was made a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh (1986), and was awarded the prestigious Doctorate Honoris Causa by Glasgow University (1999). James Cook University of North Queensland also awarded him an honorary doctorate in Science.

Professor Campbell retired in 1987 to care for his wife Monica who by then was suffering from Alzheimer’s disease. Two years after she died in 2006, he moved to Brisbane where he spent his last years with his partner Gwen Gorman. Rod Campbell is survived by three sons, four grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Colin Campbell and Alan Wilson

Professor Roderick Samuel Fisher Campbell AM, MRCVS, FRCPath, FACVSc, FACTM. Born 5 June 1924. Elected FRSE 1986. Died 22 March 2018