



## e-newsletter of the International Society of Mycotoxicology 02/2021

### Foreword by the ISM president:

Dear ISM-member,

After installation of the new ISM Executive Board, a first virtual Board meeting took place on March 25, 2021 with all members (President: Sarah De Saeger, 1st Vice-President: Sheila Okoth, 2nd Vice-President: Isabelle Oswald, Secretary: Antonio Moretti, Treasurer: Giancarlo Perrone, Past presidents: Rudolf Krska, Antonio F. Logrieco and Deepak Bhatnagar).

The general objectives of the Society are to promote research on mycotoxins and toxigenic fungi and thereby reduce exposure to mycotoxins, enhance food safety and increase public awareness in this area. During the next four-year term, **it is our ambition to further increase the visibility of ISM and build a strong community**. Indeed, only international collaboration will enable us to further reduce the impact of the mycotoxin problem and improve food safety for everybody on the globe. We do hope you will join us in this mission and I call upon all of you to stimulate your colleagues to become members of this exciting network.

These are challenging times for all of us. However, Covid-19 has taught me that virtual on-line webinars and meetings are easy-to-access tools to further push collaborations within the international mycotoxin community and to create more awareness among stakeholders. Nevertheless, I do hope that, together with the ISM Executive Board, we can meet each other in person in one of the next months.

The ISM Executive Board was very sad and deeply shocked when we received the news of the sudden passing on of Professor Wentzel Gelderblom. **Professor Gordon S. Shephard has written an obituary for the ISM community** which has also been published in the World Mycotoxin Journal <https://doi.org/10.3920/wmj2021.x002>.

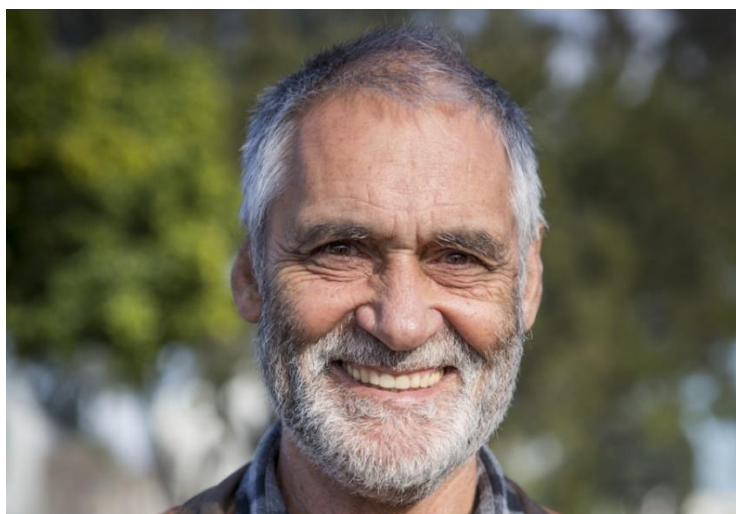
Dear colleagues and friends, keep safe and take care. I trust we will meet soon again!

Sarah De Saeger

## PROFESSOR WENTZEL C.A. GELDERBLOM

(1951-2021)

The international mycotoxicology community is mourning the passing of one of its stalwart members, Prof Wentzel Gelderblom, affectionately known to us all as “Blom”. After undergraduate studies, in 1980 he joined a research team of the South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC) investigating the then unknown carcinogen produced by *Fusarium verticillioides*. After his Masters and PhD studies on the mutagen fusarin C concluded that this was not the sought after carcinogen, Blom continued this research using a cancer initiation/promotion bioassay in rats, which resulted in his isolation and discovery of the carcinogenic fumonisins.



Blom went on to head the subprogramme Experimental Carcinogenesis at the PROMEC Unit of the SAMRC, before being promoted to be PROMEC director. With the unfortunate closure of PROMEC, he led his team into the Cape Peninsula University of Technology as Research Chair and the founding director of the Institute of Biomedical and Microbial Biotechnology.

Blom received the Visiting Scientist Award from the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) working on the mechanisms of cancer induction of the fumonisins and served on international groups such as the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA) and IARC on the evaluation of risk parameters and carcinogenesis potency of the fumonisin B mycotoxins. He maintained many links with researchers both in USA and Europe and more recently contributed to two IARC publications on improving mycotoxin control, particularly in low- and middle-income countries.

Blom’s research interests remained primarily focussed on fumonisins, their biochemistry, toxicology, mode of action, risk assessment, and risk management. Apart from fumonisins, Blom collaborated on ground breaking research on the cancer preventative properties of dietary fatty acids and with researchers from the University of Stellenbosch on the putative health properties of two of South Africa’s indigenous teas, rooibos and honeybush. He published widely in the scientific literature, where he was extensively cited, acted as supervisor for numerous PhD candidates and was frequently invited as session chair and speaker to international scientific conferences and workshops.

Apart from his science, Blom was a keen rose gardener and an inveterate runner, training in the early mornings, even during congresses, and he had frequently participated in two of South Africa’s iconic ultramarathons. Perhaps better known to the mycotoxin community was his role as “goalie” for the mycotoxin team at the traditional Gordon Research Conference

soccer match. Some years ago Blom developed a passion for biking, bought a top-end motor bike and took to the open road with family as “Blom-the-biker”.

Prof Gelderblom had a passion for science, a deep commitment to his colleagues and students, and was a loving and caring family man. He will be widely missed by all of us who had the good fortune to know and work with him.