

Simon Bernard

1967 – 2011



Simon Bernard, a Melbourne plastic and reconstructive surgeon, died suddenly of heart disease aged 43.

The son of Eugene, a Melbourne GP and Holocaust survivor and Patricia, a pharmacist, Simon was raised in Melbourne and attended Scotch College where he excelled academically, gaining entry to Medicine at Melbourne University in 1985.

Simon thrived at University and was much loved by his fellow students. His love and talent for anatomy were rewarded with his naming as a prosector in anatomy in 1986. While at University, Simon indulged his love of performance, as a member of both the medical and law revues in his early years. His outgoing personality, accurate impersonations (especially of lecturers) and talent for slightly goofy comedy shone. Recitals of favourite scenes from Monty Python's Holy Grail and his versions of Bob Hawke, Don Chipp and John Cain entertained friends for years to come. He graduated in 1990 with the Stirling Prize in Clinical Surgery amongst other academic prizes.

After two years resident at the Royal Melbourne Hospital, Simon spent 1993 demonstrating in anatomy and physiology back at the University. On returning to the hospital to continue his residency, Simon met Julie, an engineering graduate from Ann Arbor in Michigan, who had moved to Australia to undertake an MBA at Melbourne University.

This wonderful period in his life was interrupted when he was diagnosed with Hodgkin's lymphoma. Simon's medical career was put on hold while he underwent chemotherapy and radiotherapy.

A tribute to Simon's amazing personality and the support of Julie is that, aside from some hair and weight loss, many of his friends noted little change in his positive outlook and sense of humour.

Simon and Julie were married in San Diego at the end of 1995. On returning to Melbourne, Simon was selected for advanced training in plastic and reconstructive surgery. Their first child, Madeline, born in 1996, was followed in subsequent years by Max and Hugo. Despite the demands of working long hours and continuous study, Simon still found the time and energy to be with Julie and play an important role in raising their children.

On completing surgical training, Simon established his practice in plastic and reconstructive surgery, with public hospital appointments at the Royal Melbourne and the Northern hospitals. His relaxed and self-effacing manner disguised a dedication to both his patients and his work that resulted in a thriving practice and the love and respect of patients and colleagues. Somehow he found time to complete a Doctorate of Medicine under the guidance of Professor Ian Taylor.

Established in practice and free of the restrictions that ten years of medical training had imposed, Simon indulged his greatest passion – time with Julie and the children. With Julie's family in the USA and Simon's auntie Alice and cousin Netta in Israel, as well as friends scattered over most continents, few opportunities to travel were missed and skiing, a pastime Simon had enjoyed since student days, became a favourite with the family.

Simon is survived by Julie, Madeline, Max and Hugo, by his mother Pat, and his brother Andrew and sister Lisa.

Credit: This account was put together by a number of Simon's friends and colleagues.