Public shows little fear of flu pandemic

In loving memory of

Arthur Werner Müller

19 February 1928 – 24 May 2008

Arthur grew up in Zurich, Switzerland, with his parents and sister Elenor.

It was while attending primary school that he first met Heidi who was to eventually become his wife and life partner. On leaving school he took up and completed his apprenticeship as a sheet metal worker and was also called up for National Service in the Swiss Army.

Arthur was a keen Soccer player who played in the position of Goal Keeper and traveled with his club in Switzerland, Germany and Austria on weekends. Arthur's pioneering spirit caused him to come to New Zealand which his parents had done five years earlier, and who had settled in Wellington.

He and Heidi sailed on the Tamaroa in 1955 with Verena and Roland, and he didn't speak a word of English. The day after arriving Arthur started work at Sheet metals in Newmarket where he worked for the next four years.

Heidi was born in 1956, the first Kiwi in the Muller family.

It was during this early period that the Auckland Swiss Club was founded in which Arthur was extremely active as he was many years later with the Auckland Swiss Farm where he enjoyed target shooting. Arthur was the Rifle Master of the Swiss Society of New Zealand for 10 years; he also served as Switzerland's Honorary Consul for 25 years and met many interesting people during that time.

In 1959 he started his own Sheet metal business and was in business for 30 years during which time he employed family members as well as Swiss, Kiwis, and many other nationalities,

Arthur never really recovered from a heart operation 10 years ago and has been lovingly looked after at home by Heidi ever since. He is survived by his loving wife Heidi, his three children, Verena, Roland, and Heidi, nine grandchildren and four great-grandchildren, who are spread over New Zealand, Australia, and the United States.

He will be remembered for his love of life and his strong work ethics. But above all else the strongest memory of all will be that of the deep and enduring love he had for his beloved Heidi, and every member of his family and extended family as a whole, for they really were the centre of his universe.

Calls for action over treatment rationing

Swiss doctors are in some cases rationing the treatment they provide - but the practice is kept quiet. The Swiss Academy of Medical Sciences is calling for more public debate on the issue and says guidelines should be drawn up for medics.

Spiralling health costs, an ageing population and continual advances in medicine mean that some countries have already started to consider whether to ration certain therapies. But weighing up the usefulness of treatments against their cost opens up an ethical and legal minefield. Britain has already set some limits, such as on hip operations and renal replacement therapy for patients over the age of 70. In some parts of the country, smokers have to give up their habit first before they will be considered for a heart operation.

In many other countries - Switzerland included - the subject remains taboo.

Although it is estimated to be fairly widespread, the practice of rationing treatment remains one mainly carried out in secret. In a recent study published by the Swiss Academy of Medical Sciences, two-thirds of doctors admitted that for cost reasons they had not carried out medical tests or analyses that would have benefited patients. These included laboratory tests and computer assisted tomography.

Health experts are not calling for fixed rules or lists of therapies that could be limited or denied. The final decision would be discussed by the doctor and the patient. The important factor is that by using the guidelines the doctor feels reassured when taking his or her decision. *from swissinfo*

Public shows little fear of flu pandemic

Only one in ten Swiss has bothered to stock up on protective masks to be used in the event of a flu pandemic, according to a Federal Health Office poll.

The survey showed that most residents do not intend to buy masks. Around half of the 1'011 respondents said they considered a pandemic unlikely, while a third questioned the value of such a measure.

The health office issued personal hygiene recommendations last year. Besides stocking up on masks, these include regular washing of hands with soap, using a paper tissue when coughing or sneezing and avoiding handshakes.

The authorities are warning that the risk of a flu epidemic is much higher than a few years ago and that a virus could mutate at any time. *from swissinfo*