

THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL SELECT COMMITTEE ON REGISTRATION OF OVERSEAS-TRAINED MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS MET IN THE CONFERENCE ROOM, GOVERNMENT OFFICES, 68 ROOKE MALL, DEVONPORT ON THURSDAY 16 APRIL 1998.

Mrs LEAH MARGARET EDWARDS, WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

CHAIRMAN - (Mr Wilkinson) - Mrs Edwards, thanks for coming along. Can you please state your full name, address and in what capacity you are before us.

Mrs EDWARDS - Yes, Leah Margaret Edwards. I live in the retirement village at Shearwater. If I get a little bit emotional it is because I have not long lost my husband, so forgive me. What else did you want to know? Why I am here?

CHAIRMAN - You are here because Dr Iastrebov helped your husband.

Mrs EDWARDS - I am here speaking on his behalf. I have taken a few notes here because I did not feel up to it.

CHAIRMAN - It is fairly informal.

Mrs EDWARDS - Thank you, because I am only speaking as my husband's wife and I would like to thank you for this opportunity of coming here to support Dr Iastrebov. But if you do not mind I would like to call him Dr Stan because I always referred to him as such.

Mr SQUIBB - And it is easier too.

Mrs EDWARDS - My comments are from the perspective of a patient's wife. My husband was hospitalised on 12 February for an aneurism. It was called a triple-A, was the abdominal aortic aneurism, and he was operated on by Mr Lamont. There were complications when he was in the theatre and they found that his heart and lungs, which caused his death later on. He was five weeks, or a little over five weeks, in intensive care, and I want to commend Dr Stan on his staff, for doing everything possible to give my husband a chance of survival. They were absolutely wonderful. Dr Stan has a terrific bedside manner. I know he is a very busy man, but he had time to talk with me and the family in an open and frank way.

CHAIRMAN - Did he put you at ease during the problems?

Mrs EDWARDS - Oh, definitely, yes, at the ICU. It was difficult at times to know what was best, but as Dr Stan said on many occasions, 'I will do everything medically possible, but in the end it is between your husband and God', and he gave my husband every chance.

CHAIRMAN - What would you have thought, if I could break in and try and make it easier for? What would have you thought if let us say Stan was not here and your husband would have been transferred to Launceston or Hobart?

Mrs EDWARDS - He would not have made it.

CHAIRMAN - And why do you say that?

Mrs EDWARDS - Well, the aneurism was so big. It was bigger than a tennis ball, and he was very lucky that it had not burst then. We did not even know that my husband had a bad heart. He did not and I did not. And it was only through being in the theatre, through Dr Stan, that he found this out, and he was absolutely wonderful.

CHAIRMAN - When you say that he was in the theatre and Stan found it out, did your husband go into theatre for some other reason?

Mrs EDWARDS - He went for surgery on the aneurism.

CHAIRMAN - And they found it. Right.

Mrs EDWARDS - Yes.

CHAIRMAN - And because Stan is where he is, the Mersey Hospital can carry out operations and care that they could not previously carry out, how would it have been an upheaval for you to say jump into the car, or bus or whatever and go to Launceston to visit your husband?

Mrs EDWARDS - I could not do that because as it was they had a roster for me from Shearwater and every morning I was picked up and taken into the hospital and every night I was picked up and brought home.

Mr LOONE - Who provided that service for you? The hospital or your friends?

Mrs EDWARDS - No, my friends - the Lions Club mainly.

Mr SQUIBB - Was this your first experience with the care provided by Mersey Hospital?

Mrs EDWARDS - Yes, it was, and it was absolutely wonderful.

CHAIRMAN - And your husband was there for five weeks, did you say?

Mrs EDWARDS - A little over five weeks in intensive care, yes. He never left intensive care, and Dr Stan used to come morning, noon and night. He was always very attentive and yes, he did try old and new techniques too, because at one stage there I went in and he was turned over on his stomach, and that was to help him with his breathing.

CHAIRMAN - And did you have any other family that could have helped at all?

Mrs EDWARDS - Such as -

CHAIRMAN - Such as daughters, sons that lived in the area, that could have gone to see your husband and help.

Mrs EDWARDS - Oh, we had three sons but they were all - Michael, the eldest, lives in Sydney; Brian is in Hobart and Peter is in Launceston.

CHAIRMAN - I am asking this because there has been some evidence that if certain areas do not have the specialists, the patients have to go to other areas. That is a real cost and upheaval for the family and the patient as well, because part of any rehabilitation is physical and the other part is mental, I suppose,

and if you are in another area, you do not have the support that you otherwise have if you are in your area, where all your relations can come and see you.

Mrs EDWARDS - Definitely, yes, but I had my sister-in-law and brother, Jack. There was a brother. They lived in Devonport here.

CHAIRMAN - We have had numerous people come before us and tell us of the expertise of Dr Stan, so there is no argument of his expertise and everybody seems to speak of him in glowing terms.

Mrs EDWARDS - I should think so.

CHAIRMAN - What we have to look at is, as you know, because he has come as an overseas-trained doctor into Australia, now there are rules that have been set down allowing conditional registration for a two-year period.

Mrs EDWARDS - Have they revised these rules since way back or I mean, we have had these rules for years, have we not? Have they kind of revised them?

CHAIRMAN - Originally, people who were specialists in the UK, and they made have trained in other areas, and as I understand, Stan trained in Russia and then he did areas of specialty in the UK, and prior to 1992, I think, was the date we were given, meant that if he was a specialist in the UK in that field, well he would come to Australia and remain a specialist in Australia. But it would seem that it is a Commonwealth political matter, that they are worried about the glut of doctors, especially now from South Africa, because South Africa had the same mutual recognition as the United Kingdom and therefore they are saying that those people now do not get mutual recognition. In other words, they have to go through the special examination process prior to them being fully registered within Australia, and that is what we are looking at, especially for the rural areas and regional areas because -

Mrs EDWARDS - We are so short of them in the rural areas, are we not?

CHAIRMAN - In rural areas. Did you hear that?

Mr SQUIBB - And regional. I notice you have picked it up.

CHAIRMAN - Is there anything else you wanted to expand on, to us.

Mrs EDWARDS - No, I will just glance through these little notes that I put here. I can speak only for myself and my whole family when I say that Dr Stan with his abilities, well he is too good to lose. He is only young and he is just really brilliant at his work and he is a specialist.

Mr LOONE - Obviously, Mrs Edwards, the reason we are here is to try to come up with solutions to allow registrations such as Dr Iastrebov to be effective. So we are hoping by viewing lots of people like yourselves that we will be able to come up with suggestions that are practical and that we hope will be accepted. So it is not only just Dr Iastrebov we are looking at it is overseas registrations in general. But like Mr Wilkinson, I thank you for giving your time.

Mr SQUIBB - You are obviously full of praise now after the experience for Dr Iastrebov. I am just wondering what your initial reaction was when your first went in to the hospital and found that your husband was being treated by an overseas-trained doctor, a doctor you had never heard of at that stage.

Mrs EDWARDS - No reaction, because I have put my full faith in - well to start with, Mr Lamont spoke brilliantly of him to start with, I mean, and if it was a case of he had to have surgery, so you put your faith in your anaesthetist.

Mr SQUIBB - The fact that he was not fully registered did not concern you at that -

Mrs EDWARDS - No, no. I put, as I said, my husband in his hands.

CHAIRMAN - Thanks for your interest and thanks for coming along and all the best.

THE WITNESS WITHDREW.