

Medical Emergency Whilst Traveling Australia

In February 2010 my wife and I started on our planned trip to visit our son and family in Christchurch New Zealand. Our flights were all booked from Birmingham, with Emirates Airline and using the emirates reward scheme miles we upgraded the long 15 hours homeward flight from Sydney to Dubai, to Business Class. Everything was in place including Medical Insurance with "Esure" to cover my "pre-existing condition" – Angina!

Flights to N Zealand were really tiring but uneventful and after three pleasant weeks in New Zealand we set off for Sydney Australia.

Having stayed at the York Apartments while working in Sydney some years ago we had booked in again for eight days. Over the next few days we had a very enjoyable time meeting up with old friends and revisiting the sights of Sydney. One memorable day was spent cruising the Hawkesbury River taking in the amazing scenery and I thoroughly recommend it.

On our last day in Australia our flight out was in the evening so we checked out of the apartment, put our cases in baggage store for the day and went walking and walking until about 11.30 am when we had coffee near to the opera house. It was then that the pains started at the bottom of the Breast Bone, not an area where I was used to experiencing angina pains.

I thought that I would try walking it off and eventually I struggled my way uphill back to the apartments where my wife got the receptionist to call a doctor. Amazingly, before I had time to cross the floor to a seat, an asian doctor Dr Quach (remarkably similar to Quack!) appeared as if by magic.

After the usual questions he determined that it was possible that I was having a heart attack and he recommended going to his surgery near the "Rocks." So we got into a Taxi to the surgery which had the appearance of a Chinese Herbal Medicine shop with the doctor's aging mother as receptionist.

The doctor said he was going to take a blood sample, send it by taxi to a laboratory and the result would be back in an hour and confirm that I May be having a heart attack, he then carried out an ECG, the result of which I still don't know. He proceeded to sound my chest and said I had fluid on the lungs, suggesting that he should take me to a local private Xray facility. At this point I was sure I was being exploited and I was his meal ticket, so I said no! just deal with the heart issue and anything else I deal with back at home. Unfortunately I was over ruled by my wife and off we went for the xray which I believe was negative, it was then recommended that I have CT scan which was carried out immediately and as soon as I got back to the reception area I got a bill for A\$800. It was now about 3.30pm and during all these proceedings I was told that I would not be allowed to fly home that evening. So throughout everything my wife was trying to cancel our flights and the chauffeured car that was provided with the Business Class upgrade.

It was then that result of the blood test arrived which showed up certain enzymes which suggested that I could be having a heart attack and the doctor called an ambulance. The ambulance with Paramedics arrived very quickly and I entered St Vincent's hospital A & E . Here I received very good care with lots of attention by a young female Asian doctor and various tests but I still had the original

pains and as the evening progressed it looked as though I would be kept in overnight and my wife was worrying about where she could spend the night, so she contacted the York apartments and booked another night.

However, having now diagnosed my problem as "Acute Gastritis" (Indigestion) at about 9.00pm it was decided that I could be discharged and both my wife and I went back to the apartment and by 10.00pm the pain just went away. On arrival at the apartment there was an envelope waiting for me - Dr Quack's (sorry Dr Quach's) account A\$1800.

We flew home the next evening on Emirates new A380 Service and arrived home without incident.

I hope the full story will be of interest to traveller but my real reason for writing is to advise what should be done if in a similar situation. There were no charges for the hospital care which was excellent this is because there are reciprocal arrangements with the UK. However Ambulance charges do apply in Australia for everyone including tourists and some months later I had a bill for A\$600

So the advice is

1. Do not call a doctor but Call The emergency Services Tel No. 000 and ask for an ambulance
2. Make sure that you have adequate Travel Insurance.

My Insurance claim for over A\$3,500 including an additional night's accommodation was met in full by Esure without too much difficulty>