

AGENDA ITEM 1.8 OBITUARY

PROFESSOR PATRICK JOHN MOLLOY FRACS CARDIOTHORACIC SURGEON 3 AUGUST 1928 – 19 MAY 2020

Having obtained cardiothoracic training in London, and considerable experience working amid the Northern Ireland Conflict, Patrick Molloy returned to New Zealand in 1973 to develop and lead the South Island's first cardiac surgery unit in Dunedin. With the appointment by the University of Otago to a chair of Cardiothoracic Surgery, Prof Molloy was an early provider of paediatric cardiac surgery in New Zealand. He is fondly remembered for his empathy and gentlemanly demeanor towards staff and patients.

Patrick (widely known as Pat) Molloy was born in Auckland to James Reuben Molloy, solicitor, and Kathleen Frances (nee Worthington), a nurse. Pat and his only sibling, Joe were identical twins. Growing up in Ellerslie in Auckland they were among the first students at St Peter's College where Pat was a good rugby player. He completed a BSc at Auckland University and then gained entry to Otago Medical School in 1948. In Dunedin he became a keen and proficient rower representing Otago University. He completed his MB ChB in 1953.

Pat spent his house surgeon years in Auckland hospitals including Green Lane Hospital where he worked with Douglas Robb and this proved to be a significant influence on his subsequent career. During this time, he met Julia Waldron, a nurse from St Bathans in Central Otago, and they married in 1954. He worked as a GP in Hamilton for two years to fund his family's travel to the United Kingdom. In 1958, with Julia and their four children, Prudence, Brigid, Adrienne and Katherine-Mary, he set off for London to pursue a career in cardiac surgery, becoming FRCS(Eng) in 1960. At Guy's Hospital in London in 1960-1964 he worked alongside ground-breaking surgeons Sir Russell Brock and Donald Ross, the latter completing the UK's first heart transplant in 1968. In 1964 Patrick was appointed to a cardiothoracic surgery consultancy at Broadgreen Hospital in Liverpool.

In 1968, Pat and Julia, now with a family of nine children, with the addition of Alison, Felicity, Ruth, Veronica and Charlotte, moved to Belfast, Northern Ireland, when Pat was appointed to lead the formation of a new cardiothoracic surgical unit at the Royal Victoria Hospital. This was during the period of conflict known as "the Troubles" and the older children recall numerous occasions when their father was called out in the middle of the night to help a victim of a shooting. In this emergency work he developed a technique, which is still widely used in conflict zones, for treating chest wounds resulting from the large rubber bullets used by the army.

In 1970 Prof Molloy was invited to assess the needs for cardiac surgery in New Zealand. His report predicted growth in this rapidly developing field and recommended a surgical unit be set up in Dunedin. The Dunedin unit, with close connections to the University of Otago Medical School, was established in 1973, and Pat and his family, with the addition of James, Hannah being born three years later, returned from Northern Ireland so he could take up the lead role. Becoming FRACS in 1975, he devoted his skill and energy to the establishment and direction of the cardiac unit in Dunedin. He was, however, worried, about the subsequent implications of a proposal for a further cardiac surgery unit in Christchurch and told a 1977 national review that slashing Dunedin's workload would be "disastrous". A significant reduction in cases risked turning the Dunedin unit into a "completely inefficient nonentity". The second cardiothoracic surgery unit in the South Island was opened in Christchurch in 1997.

Pat Molloy was a man of great intelligence with an extensive knowledge of anatomy and physiology. He developed a very loyal and effective team and was held in high regard by those who worked closely with him. He had excellent relationships with his cardiology colleagues and an easy relaxed manner with his patients with whom he exchanged information in words they readily understood. He was held in very high regard by those who came under his care. Dependable in times of difficulty with a dry wit, he was a careful, skilled and compassionate surgeon, who showed empathy to all. He was a committed and engaging teacher, not only to attached surgical registrars, but also to cardiac and medical registrars he came into contact with during consultations.

Pat was a member of the British Cardiac Society and the British Thoracic Society serving on its Executive Committee 1969-73. He was a regular participant in Cardiac Society of Australia and New Zealand activities and served on the Executive 1979-86. He was a member of the RACS Cardiothoracic Surgery Board and served as an examiner in Cardiothoracic Surgery. With the aid of a generous benefactor, Pat was instrumental in setting up and subsequently chairing the Dunedin Heart Unit Trust, assisting with local research, and educational grants. He was also a trustee of the Drug and Rehabilitation Trust. Pat retired from surgery in 1993 and became an emeritus professor the next year. His last role at the Otago Medical School was curator of the surgical museum. A skier, tennis player and rower in his early years he was keen golfer for much of his life, playing at least weekly at the Balmacewen course throughout his professional career. Golfing friends later became bridge buddies, although Pat was not renowned for his skill in this pursuit! He had an interest in geology and his children recall happy holidays scrambling over rocks to find fish fossils high in the Welsh mountains and pieces of quartz in the coldest of Central Otago rivers. For many years he was involved in the resettlement in New Zealand of Cambodian and Vietnamese refugees.

The Molloy's were married for 63 years, Julia Molloy dying in 2017. As well as caring for their 11 children, in the late 1970s they absorbed into their family a young woman, Kirsty McMillan, who lived next door, and in the early '80s a Cambodian refugee, Phirum Keo, who would later become deputy leader of the Opposition in Cambodia. Aged 91 years and requiring increased daily support, Patrick moved into care at the Little Sisters of the Poor in Brockville, where he was well cared for. The family remember him as an ever-present dad and granddad who listened with an open mind and was available in his quiet way through difficult and good times.

Patrick Molloy is survived by his children, Prudence, Brigid, Adrienne, Katherine-Mary, Alison, Felicity, Ruth; Veronica, Charlotte, James, and Hannah, Phirum Keo and Kirsty MacMillan, 37 grandchildren and 36 great-grandchildren.

This obituary was contributed to by Molloy family members plus Grant Miller, Gerard Wilkins, Richard Bunton and Dame Norma Restieaux DBE; plus the obituary published in the ODT on 20 Sept 2020.