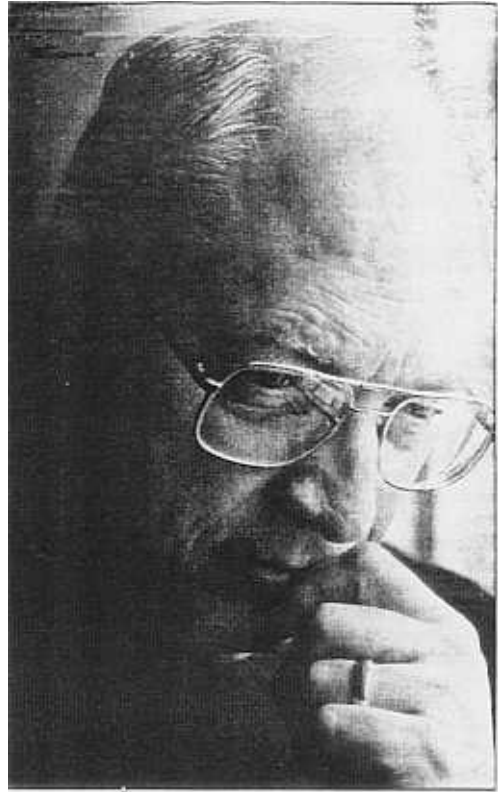
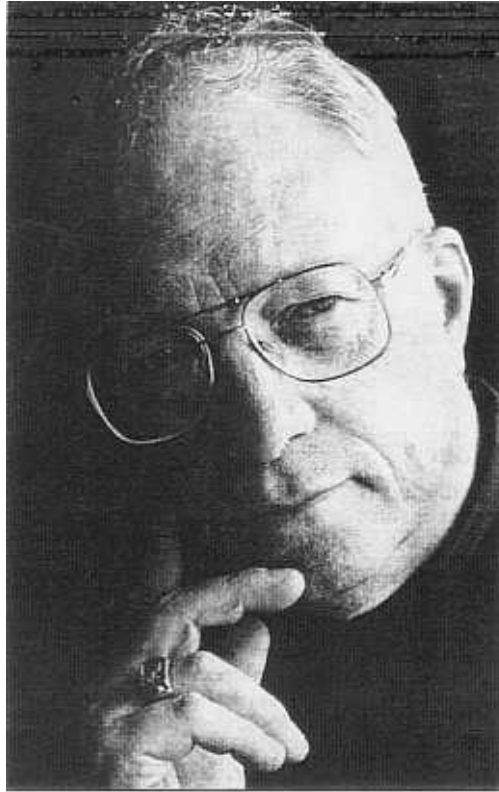


LONG-DISTANCE MEDICINE



Carl Russo/Eagle-Tribune

A pensive Walter J. Niessen reflects on how a call to a WorldClinic doctor in Burlington may well have saved his life when he suffered a heart attack while in China on business.

He owes his life to a call from Beijing to Burlington

◆ An Andover man credits a new international doctor service with his survival.

By Bogart Salzberg
Eagle-Tribune Writer

ANDOVER — No time is a good time to have a heart attack. But to Walter J. Niessen of Andover, it seemed the timing could not have been worse.

He was in China, on business, alone in a Beijing hotel room at 2 a.m., doubled over in pain. He was daunted by the language barriers that stood between him and a hospital. So he called a doctor in Burlington.

"You're not in the position to marshal forces on your own behalf," recalled Mr. Niessen, a 61-year-old chemical engineer whose consulting work often takes him abroad. "You're in the position of folding in on yourself and withdrawing. You just want someone to take care of you."

Dr. Daniel J. Carlin obliged. The founder and chief executive officer of the Burlington-based WorldClinic, Dr. Carlin answered Mr. Niessen's distress call. He diagnosed the heart attack and helped Mr.

"I owe my life to him. Between Dr. Carlin and the Lord, I was taken care of."

Walter J. Niessen

Niessen stabilize himself with medications from a WorldClinic travel kit. He found a translator, called paramedics, and briefed the Chinese doctors on Mr. Niessen's medical history while he was still en route to the hospital.

Dr. Carlin updated Mr. Niessen's wife Dorothy on the progress of emergency surgery as it was happening. Mr. Niessen spent a week in Beijing recovering. He was escorted from Beijing to Boston by a doctor and arrived home in Andover last week.

"I owe my life to him," Mr. Niessen said of his long-distance doctor. "Between Dr. Carlin and the Lord, I was taken care of."

Mr. Niessen signed up for WorldClinic's "distance medicine" service three days before he left for China. He imagined he might use WorldClinic's travel kit for its Band-Aids

or antacids. He ended up dosing himself with a drug cocktail that lowered his blood pressure and heart rate, thinned his blood and prevented irregular heartbeats. Doctors at the Beijing hospital were able to assess the heart attack's effects by comparing their electrocardiogram to one recorded in the "medical passport" that WorldClinic had issued to Mr. Niessen.

"When he called it was clear things were going in a negative direction," said Dr. Carlin. An emergency angioplasty saved Mr. Niessen's life, but Dr. Carlin's help "bought him a lot of time" to get to the operating table, Mr. Niessen said.

"I not only survived, I survived well," said Mr. Niessen. "It's given me a really good start on rehab."

A former medical officer on a nuclear-powered submarine, Dr. Carlin founded WorldClinic in 1998 to serve business travelers. WorldClinic doctors use telephone, e-mail, fax and video conferencing to diagnose and help treat illnesses from afar. They use WorldClinic's own global catalog of doctors and hospitals to connect traveling patients with local medical care, said Dr. Carlin.

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