

Telos A.L.E.F.F. Limited

Main Office 53/54 Skylines, Limeharbour, LONDON, E14 9TS, UK

UK voice +44 (0) 20 7515 9009 fax +44 (0)20 7515 5465

US voice (850) 212 8080

email Juliankh@aol.com

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Dr. Arthur King

With the greatest sadness, we record the recent death of Dr. Arthur King, a true original. It seems almost impossible that someone with so much vital energy and such a strong presence should no longer be with us, joking, cajoling, inspiring, leading. Our condolences to his long-time partner Jenny mixed with our gratitude for having had the chance to work with someone of extraordinary humanity, flair and individuality.

We had the good fortune to get to know Arthur during the development of two major multimedia programs on Rabies as part of our collaborations both with the AVIS Consortium and with Merial. "Hello man" he would say as he strode into our Docklands offices from the Waterloo train, "what's new?". Arthur was appointed General Editor in 1996, and he executed his task admirably, bringing the programs to publication in 2000. Not only did he lead by example, gathering together and editing with Dr. Michel Lombard all the materials we needed with skill and scholarship, he was always driven by the wish to help those faced with the challenge of Rabies do a better job. He grumbled, as only Arthur could, that he did not understand computers, but in fact he used them very well and to great effect. And a good lunch, with a few golfing anecdotes and jokes, would calm him. The resulting programs are knowledge benchmarks, in considerable demand. Their worldwide success is giving rise to further programs on the disease, which will bear his stamp as well. His forthcoming book, with Dr. Alex Wandeler, will no doubt be a classic.

It frustrated Arthur that coordination between all the parties dealing with rabies was often less than optimal and he did what he could to build bridges; it angered him that lives were wasted unnecessarily; and the knowledge that so much of the suffering the disease caused was avoidable, drove him to superhuman efforts, throughout his life – to the expense of his own health. His passionate, vocational, commitment to his calling inspired us deeply and not only do we miss a great professional colleague, even more we miss a human being whose values made us lift our eyes higher than before and whose standards challenged us to respond to him in kind.

Before his death, Arthur had kindly agreed to assist in forming the AVIS College, an international group of experts, already working with AVIS on disease information systems, ready to offer assistance to those who needed it through personal support and intervention. He may have taken comfort from the fact that the very day he died, the College moved a major step forward; and its founding values will, we hope, be true to his and form a small part of his remarkable legacy.