

Greek court voids property deal between barman and alcoholic



ATHENS (AFP) – A Greek appeal court has declared void a deal under which an alcoholic traded his apartment to a bar owner in return for free drink for the rest of his life, a newspaper reported.

The agreement concerned an apartment worth 33,000 euros (46,000 dollars) which the 62-year old drinker sold to the bar owner for 6,500 euros (9,100 dollars) with the right to live in it rent-free until he died, according to

Eleftherotypia.

A tab of 900 euros (1,225 dollars) was written off and the vendor undertook to provide free drinks for the rest of the drinker's life.

Four years after signing the deal the toper died and his brother took the case to court.

The court said the terms of the deal had been disproportionate and contrary to decent behaviour as they exploited an individual's dependence.

Obesity a problem for Australia's flying doctors

Officials in the Australian state of New South Wales are seeking larger planes for the famous flying doctor service, because current aircraft are not large enough to transport obese patients. According to recent global surveys, Australians are among the most obese people in the world. State authorities have put out a tender to assess the costs of two larger planes for the air ambulance fleet. The new planes would be able to carry patients weighing up to 260 kilogrammes, almost twice the current limit of 140 kilogrammes. A spokesperson says ground and helicopter ambulances have already been adapted to cope with obese patients.

Canberra refuses freed Guantanamo inmates

Australia has refused a US request to resettle former prisoners from Guantanamo Bay. Earlier, it had appeared likely that Canberra would agree to Washington's request but widespread public opposition to the measure seems to have influenced the Australian government's decision. Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard said the government considered the request but rejected it as the detainees did not meet Australia's stringent national security and immigration requirements.

The US has cleared 60 of the remaining 255 Guantanamo detainees for release but they cannot be repatriated for fear that they will be tortured or persecuted in their home countries. Last week, the US State Department asked about 100 countries for help in resetting the detainees. US president-elect Barack Obama has promised to close the controversial detention camp.

Foreigner may deny my baby a life-saver

The British parents of a dying child are left pleading for a Transplants donor as organs go overseas

ETHAN COLLINS celebrated his first birthday last month in the hospital ward where he has spent all of his life.

His doctors say he will die within weeks if an organ donor is not found to give him a liver and intestine.

Donna Browne and Stuart Collins, his parents, are so frantic they have made a plea on Facebook, the social networking website, asking for as many people as possible to register as organ donors.

Ethan, who is being treated at Booth Hall children's hospital in Manchester, is just one of almost 8,000 British patients now waiting for organs. Figures obtained under the Freedom of Information Act show that in the past two years 50 British organs have been given to overseas patients in private operations at NHS hospitals costing about £75,000 each.

While Browne is sympathetic to the plight of the patients from Greece, Cyprus and Malta who travel to Britain for transplants, she is concerned that an organ that could save her son might be destined for a patient from outside the UK.



"If I found out that someone from another country had got one and it could have been my son, I wouldn't be very happy," said Browne, from Whitefield, Greater Manchester. One of the main NHS hospitals offering organ transplants to people abroad is King's College in London. In advertises its service as part of its King's International & Private Patient Services wing.

Potential foreign clients are told that the hospital has the largest children's liver transplant programme in Europe and the biggest UK adult liver transplant programme. The service is run by the renowned liver transplant surgeon Professor Nigel Heaton, who performed a liver transplant on the footballer George Best and is assisted by six consultant transplant surgeons, eight paediatric liver medicine consultants and six adult liver medicine consultants.

The promotional literature does not make clear, however, that British donors will be providing many of the organs.

The issue of whether a scarce organ should be given to someone overseas is a dilemma that has divided transplants doctors. Some believe it is their duty to treat needy patients from elsewhere in Europe, whereas others believe the organ pool is a scarce resource created by the generosity of the British public for its own citizens.

European laws on the freedom of movement of goods and services give patients the right to seek treatment in any of the member states. Britain is not obliged to treat these patients, however, and the decision is left to individual hospital trusts.

Doctors and patient groups point out that, while the supply of other medical treatments such as hip operations is restricted only by the financial cost of employing the surgeons and purchasing the devices, organs cannot be paid for by other European states.

Imogen Shillito, director of information and education at the British Liver Trust, said: "If there is cross-border movement of patients, there has to be a similar cross-border movement of organs for transplant, otherwise patients waiting in the UK could lose out." Twenty-seven of the overseas patients given British organs in the past two years came from Greece and 14 from Cyprus. The Greek and Cypriot governments paid the British hospitals on behalf of their citizens for the patients to be treated privately.

There is a severe shortage of organ donors in Greece. Last year there were only 58 liver donors, although about 150 Greeks were waiting for liver transplants, according to Dr Alkiviadis Kostakis, president of Greece's Hellenic Transplant Organisation.

Kostakis said: "The patient makes the choice of European Union country and contacts the relevant hospital themselves.

"We confirm that the patient is in the final stages of liver failure. In the case of the UK, the priority depends on the British doctors who assess each case and decide whether, when and how the patient will receive the transplant."

Athens Airways ready for take-off



Athens what? Yes, a new small Greek airline named Athens Airways, has announced that its first domestic flight will take place between Athens and Alexandroupolis on January 15th.

Athens Airways will be using Embraer ERJ-145 jets and will be in an alliance with the US-based charter company SkyOne. There will be more destinations added to the airlines system later in the year.

We checked out to see what airfares would cost for the one route from Athens to Alexandroupolis but no such info is out there yet. Olympic's days, by the way are numbered. Qatar Airways and Iberia Air have dropped their bids.