

Cardiology patient grateful for local services

From Sheridan Memorial Hospital

Heart disease and stroke are the first and third leading causes of death for both men and women in the United States.

According to Wyoming's Department of Health, cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death in Wyoming, accounting for approximately 32 percent of the state's deaths in 2002.

John Berberick, one of Sheridan's own, is no stranger to struggles with heart disease. Diagnosed with heart disease at 37, he has had two open-heart surgeries and has had subsequent coronary stenting procedures.

Last year, Berberick experienced a different and lesser known cardiac complication called Sudden Cardiac Arrest. Sudden Cardiac Arrest accounts for half of all heart-disease deaths.

About 310,000 people a year die of heart disease without being hospitalized or admitted to an emergency room. Most of these are sudden deaths caused by cardiac arrest.

The Experience

On Oct. 3, 2007, Berberick's wife, Susan, called 911 after finding him nonresponsive. Paramedics arrived and initiated CPR and defibrillation.

They induced hypothermic therapy with cooled intravenous fluids. This process cools the body to a temperature of 91.7 degrees, which slows one's metabolism and is used as a tool to limit the amount of injury sustained in a stroke, heart attack or other severe trauma.

In Berberick's case, medical workers were trying to limit the amount of brain damage he could incur as a result of being unconscious.

Berberick was admitted to Sheridan Memorial Hospital's emergency room, where he was stabilized and flown to Saint Vincent's Medical Center in Billings.

Berberick reports being "clinically dead for 22 minutes. . . They told me later that they were anticipating my chance of survival to be less than 5 percent."

He is eternally grateful to the paramedics on the ambulance, the emergency department team at the hospital, and his Billings medical team for saving his life.

Now 68, Berberick takes full advantage of his life. He says he draws strength from God, his wife and his family.

He and Susan will celebrate 20 years of marriage this year, and they are proud new homeowners (although there is some debate about whether the true "homeownership" belongs to Muggins, their 11-year-old Boston terrier).

Berberick walks Muggins almost every day to get exercise.

Berberick has overcome 30 years of health challenges. In addition to heart disease, Berberick has also battled prostate cancer and type II diabetes.

He is working hard to spread awareness about cardiovascular disease prevention and Sudden Cardiac Arrest.

"Praise God, I beat the odds — the miracles just keep on coming," Berberick says.

Advances in Cardiology Services in Sheridan

In 2007 following his SCA event, Berberick had an Implantable Cardioverter Defibrillator placed in his heart.

These small cardiac devices continuously monitor the heart and detect abnormal rhythm. According to the Sudden Cardiac Arrest Association, the ICD is programmed to

"correct the heart rhythm by delivering precisely calibrated and timed electrical shocks to restore a normal heartbeat."

Just this year, Sheridan Memorial Hospital obtained two cardiac device programmers, and it is expecting one more.

Three device companies, Medtronic, St. Jude's Medical, and Boston Scientific, have provided the programmers to better serve patients in our community with permanent pacemakers and/or implantable cardioverter defibrillators so that device function checks and necessary programming can be done here rather than at regional sites.

Currently, Sheridan has cardiac care resources through primary care providers as well as outreach clinic support.

"I can't think of words to tell you how much of a difference this makes," Berberick said. "I'm so proud of this institution; I see it improving all the time and becoming more medically advanced."

Berberick knows the services are needed in Sheridan.

"The business is here," he explained. "On my last trip to Billings, three of the four people in the waiting area were from Sheridan."

LaNora Dixon, program development manager at SMH, said the community of Sheridan is up to the task. She stated:

"Our health care community is full of extraordinary people, and expanding our services means focusing on what our patients and providers need."

"Cardiac service provision is a priority that has been clearly identified through our strategic planning process with the community and our physicians, and we are committed to pursuing that strategic direction and exceeding the expectations of the people whom we serve."



Courtesy photo

John Berberick, who was diagnosed with heart disease in 1977 at age 37, and Sheridan Memorial Hospital Program Development Manager LaNora Dixon work hard to spread awareness of cardiovascular disease prevention.

Dixon said risk assessment is important in prevention: "John's story speaks to the importance of establishing and accessing a primary care provider to assess your risk."

She also said the resources for health care in Sheridan are tremendous: "While we are surrounded by medical centers who support the work that we do, the lifesaving events

often occur here, at home, and we have terrific resources in Sheridan and excellent emergency medicine teams working collaboratively with primary care providers in our community."

For more information related to Sudden Cardiac Arrest, go to www.suddencardiaccarrest.org.