

At the time of my episode I was an active 58-year-old with no medical history. I walked each morning for an hour and was active in my job as a registered nurse in-charge of the Transit Unit at Port Macquarie Base Hospital. My job could be a bit stressful at times and very demanding.

On the day of my event I was on my days off, it was actually Easter Saturday 26th March 2016. I had spent an uneventful day with my daughter Ti'arne going out for breakfast then shopping. I was a bit tired and had a nap for an hour in the afternoon. Upon rising I organized our evening meal and set about preparing and cooking it with Ti'arne's help. Just as I was about to take the chicken wings out of the oven I got the worst bout of indigestion imaginable. It was so bad that I rushed into our en-suite and vomited, I then got this really bad central chest pain and the sweats. I thought the sweats was due to my vomiting so I had a shower.

After my shower I asked my daughter to drive me to the ED department at the Port Macquarie Base Hospital as the pain was not subsiding. On the way to the hospital Ti'arne asked me if I wanted her to pull over several times as the pain was not easing.

On arrival to the ED department I was triaged and taken straight in where I had my observations taken and then I was taken to a recuse bay. A ECG was recorded which showed I had a STEMI. I had a cannula inserted and was thrombolysis which reverted my ECG changes back to normal I also had an IV with morphine for the pain.

I was admitted to the CCU with continuous monitoring with the likelihood of being transferred to Prince of Wales Hospital Sydney. Saying good bye to my husband and daughter that night with the belief that I would go to Sydney, have an angiogram and be back home the next day. At 3am the CCU register advised me that I would be going down to Sydney as a second person as they had an urgent transfer who needed to have an angiogram as soon as possible. So, in the early hours of Easter Sunday I was transferred down to Prince of Wales Hospital Sydney to their CCU with the critically ill man.

Arriving at Prince of Wales Sydney I had my own room. I was informed that I would have an angiogram after the patient I came down with from Port Macquarie had his. At about 10am I noticed the other patient I was transferred to Sydney with being wheeled past my room and also noticed him return.

The staff then came to collect me to have my angiogram. I was wheeled into the lab where they inserted another large cannula for the procedure. Explained to me what they were going to do and what to expect. I thought I underwent coronary catheterisation but on return to my room my cardiologist came to visit me and told me they had found something that they were not expecting. I'd had an extensive spontaneous left main dissection extending to the distal LAD with non-obstructive disease elsewhere which I as a nurse had never heard of. He also informed me that they were treating me conservatively as they did not want to operate on me unless it was the last option as I had a thrombolysis in Port Macquarie and I could bleed to death.

Subsequent to angiogram I experienced further chest pain with new ST elevation anteriorly. After my coronary angiogram when I was going through my second bout of chest pain my specialist enquired as when my husband would be arriving? I told him tomorrow or the next day. He insisted on me giving him Steve 's contact details. Steve told me later that my cardiologist told him to make his way to Sydney as soon as possible as I might not make it through the night. Steve was also told that surgery was his last option as they might not be able to stop the bleeding.

I was managed medically with an IV of heparin and Metoprolol, GTN infusion and Clopidogrel in context of my aspirin allergy.

I had daily ECHO of my heart and remained on strict bed rest for 10 days. Upon leaving Prince of Wales Hospital the cardiology registrar stated that I had no idea how sick I was which later I acknowledged as the truth.

I was transferred back to Port Macquarie Base Hospital by air ambulance to the CCU and put on continuous monitoring. After a week I was only allowed to be discharged home under the condition that I was not left alone.

I had the occasional twinge in my chest which concerned me so my cardiologist did a cardiac stress test on me and an echo which were both normal.

My entire family have been by my side the entire time with my eldest daughter travelling from Port Hedland. Without their support and love I didn't think I would be here today. It has been life changing for me and my outlooks on life have changed.

I had 9 weeks off work and returned back to work on light duties, I was not allowed to do any heavy lifting or pushing for 6 months and had a weight gain of 10kgs which sadly I'm still working at losing.

I'm due for my next check-up in September where my cardiologist is going to give me a stress test and another cardiac echo.

I never thought I would get back to the level of fitness I had prior to my episode but I'm getting there slowly and now I have a much better appreciation of life, friends and family. Possessions are of little importance and life is precious and ends far too soon. Each day with my family is a blessing.