

HealthWatch

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“ I work on the equipment at Southwest with monitors to keep track of my pulse and blood pressure.”

—Kathy Brown

Carol Persons (left) and Kathy Brown have each had life-saving treatments at Southwest General’s Heart & Vascular Institute.

Recovering from a heart attack

by **KenMcEntee**

Carol Persons was a respiratory therapist who was familiar with the traditional symptoms of heart attacks. But seven years ago, when she experienced flu-like symptoms and back pain, she did not recognize them as warning signs of a serious heart condition.

“I just didn’t feel well,” recalls Carol, a Brook Park resident. “When I had severe lower back pain I thought it was from coughing so much. I thought I had pulled a muscle. I didn’t have any chest pressure.”

When Carol got up to get an aspirin for the pain, she passed out. After regaining consciousness, she took the aspirin, but went to Southwest General when the pain didn’t subside.

“While I was in the Emergency Room, my back hurt so much that I clutched my chest in pain,” she says. “A nurse saw me and thought I was having chest pain. It was a good thing, because she took me back right away.”

Dr. Trilok Sharma performed a cardiac catheterization, a procedure that examines blood flow to the heart and tests how well the heart is pumping. The test showed that Carol had a myocardial infarction (MI) – an interruption in the supply of blood to the heart.

“The catheterization showed that I had minimal blockage in my arteries,” Carol says. “The heart attack was probably caused by a blood clot.”

For further treatment, Carol made an appointment to see Dr. Sabino Velloze, cardiologist on the Medical Staff at Southwest General, who put her on a rehabilitation plan.

“What I learned was that women have different symptoms from men,” Carol explains. “I didn’t associate my backache and flu symptoms with a heart attack. If you have symptoms like that, if they last 24 hours, don’t just ignore them. Have yourself checked out.”

Like Carol, Kathy Brown, of North Ridgeville, had flu-like symptoms that turned out to be caused by spasms of her coronary arteries, a condition known as Prinzmetal’s angina. An Emergency Room nurse at Southwest General, Kathy has had three heart attacks since 2001.

In September 2004, Kathy experienced burning in her chest and extreme weakness. A catheterization was done by Dr. Velloze to open blood flow through her arteries. “This December, I had those same symptoms again,” Kathy relates. “I was so weak that I was unable to lift my arm, which was dangling off the side of the couch.”

Dr. Michael Deucher, also a cardiologist on Southwest General’s Medical Staff, was her physician during the hospitalization for those symptoms.

“I am now in Phase II cardiac rehab,” Kathy says. “I work on the equipment at Southwest General with monitors to keep track of my pulse and blood pressure.”

Kathy is now following up with Dr. Deucher as her cardiologist.

“I love everybody in Southwest General’s Heart & Vascular Institute,” Kathy says. “Some doctors don’t listen to you or take you seriously, but that’s not the case at Southwest General. They really care about you as a person.”

Carol says the Monday evening education and support group meetings for car-

diac patients are her “night out.”

“They have so many programs that are really interesting,” she says. “I really look forward to it.”

Carol goes to rehab two or three times a week.

“I was in Phase II cardiac rehab, which means they monitor you the whole time for heart rate and blood pressure,” she explains. “You can choose to go to Phase III, which is when you do the therapy, but you are not monitored. It’s nice to be there with people who have gone through the same problem I did.”

Carol said she is delighted with the care she has received at Southwest General.

“I could not be more pleased,” she says. “I love the whole group. When you call they get back to you right away, and with Dr. Velloze I never had to worry about asking a dumb question. He is always willing to listen and answer all of my questions.”

Southwest General’s award-winning Heart & Vascular Institute includes a team of cardiologists and cardiothoracic surgeons who perform a wide range of diagnostic and therapeutic procedures, including, cath and vascular labs, electrophysiology, open-heart surgery, non-invasive services (EKG, stress tests, Holter monitors, etc.) as well as rehab, research, CHF and stroke programs, among many others. Southwest General has been 5-Star Rated for cardiology services by HealthGrades for six years in a row.

For more information about heart and vascular care, call Southwest General’s Heart & Vascular Institute at 1-877-SWG-BEAT.

did you know?

Southwest is 5-Star Rated

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