

NEWS FROM FORT SANDERS REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER

# Quick medical action helps Knoxville man survive heart attack

One day last summer, 60-year-old Charlie Morgan enjoyed a hearty lunch with the Knoxville Quarterback Club at a local restaurant. He is used to sharing a steak with fellow UT Vols fans and serves on the boards of both the Quarterback Club and the Big Orange Club.

But that afternoon, Morgan began to feel a heaviness in his chest. "I thought it was heartburn, and I was sweating," Morgan remembers. Sitting at his computer in his office at the Gray Hodges Corporation, where he is president, Morgan did a quick Internet search of his symptoms.

"It said 'heart attack,' and I thought, 'I've got a problem,'" says Morgan. "I called my wife and told her she had to take me to the hospital."

Still thinking it might be just heartburn, Morgan asked his wife to detour to the office of his family physician, Dr. Donald King.

Dr. King remembers the day well.

"Charlie's been a patient of mine for a long time, 20 years now," says Dr. King. "So when he came into our front desk complaining of chest pains, our (front office workers) knew it was nothing to fool around with."

The clinic staff performed an electrocardiogram (EKG) on Morgan and discovered he was, indeed, having a heart attack.

"I could see he has ischemia going on, a heart attack in progress," explains Dr. King. "As soon as we saw that, we called 911, because that's the quickest transportation to the ER. They were here just a split second later."

An ambulance picked up Morgan and performed another EKG test on the way to the hospital. The results were sent directly to the Emergency Department at Fort Sanders Regional Medical Center, where physicians confirmed Morgan was having a heart attack.



Even in the middle of his crisis, Morgan found the energy to kid with the ambulance staff.

"'Now sir,' I said, 'I'm going to pay you \$600 or \$700 for a five-minute ride, I want to hear that siren!' So he laughed, and turned on the siren," Morgan remembers.

But the siren didn't have to scream for long. In just a few minutes, the ambulance pulled into Fort Sanders Regional.

Hospital staff bypassed the Emergency Department and took Morgan straight to Fort Sanders' state-of-the-art cardiac catheterization lab.

"About 10 minutes after I saw Dr. King, I was on the operating table," says Morgan. "And within 45 minutes, I was in recovery."

Cardiologists inserted a stent in Morgan's clogged artery. A stent is a tiny mesh tube, collapsed to a small diameter and put over a balloon catheter. The surgeon inserts the catheter through the patient's artery in the leg and up to the heart blockage.

When the balloon is inflated, the stent expands, locks in place and forms a scaffold. This holds the artery open. Within a few weeks, the

lining of the artery grows over the metal surface of the stent.

A quick "door-to-balloon" time is crucial for reducing heart damage. Fort Sanders Regional Medical Center has one of the quickest door-to-balloon times in the region – under one hour for most patients. When blood flow is restored quickly to the heart, there is less damage.

In Morgan's case, he suffered no permanent cardiac damage, and his recovery was quick.

"This was on a Wednesday, and they released me on a Friday afternoon. I was back to work on Monday," says Morgan, who continued treatment at Fort Sanders Cardiac Rehabilitation as well (see accompanying article).

"They did an excellent job," says Morgan of Fort Sanders Regional. "When they say you're having a heart attack, forty thousand things run through your mind. So when they said it was handled within an hour, the relief was just something else."

In fact, Morgan's brother had a heart attack just a few months later and was also treated at Fort Sanders.

"He came out smelling like a rose, too," smiles Morgan. "We're so thankful for Fort Sanders."



## EMS and the Fort Sanders ER: A life saving team

During a heart attack, every second counts. At Fort Sanders Regional Medical Center, cardiologists are treating heart attack patients quicker than ever, thanks to the hospital's communication system that allows physicians to receive important test results from Rural/Metro ambulances.

Each ambulance has an onboard electrocardiogram machine to monitor heart rhythm and strength. Doctors receive the results of those tests quickly and determine whether the patient is having a heart attack before he or she ever gets to the hospital.

"In some cases, the patient can be transported directly to the Cardiac Catheterization Laboratory," explains Fort Sanders Emergency Department Manager Benny Lucas.

Once in the lab, cardiologists can perform angioplasty, a procedure in which a small balloon device is threaded into the artery to keep it open. This restores blood flow to the heart and is critical to survival.

"Time is heart muscle," explains Knoxville Heart Group cardiologist Dr. Daniel M. Slutzker. "The longer it takes to get that area open, the more heart muscle is dying. The faster you open the artery, the better your options are afterward for recovery."

Fort Sanders' "door-to-balloon" time has been reduced dramatically with the new communication equipment, Dr. Slutzker says.

"Our focus is on our ability to get patients to the Cath Lab within 90 minutes, which we do with 99 percent of our patients. In some cases, our door-to-balloon time has been just 10 minutes," says Dr. Slutzker.

"Anytime there's an increase in communication from EMS, it's going to expedite patient care. It's a great cooperative effort between EMS and the emergency and cardiac departments."

For information about the Heart Center at Fort Sanders, please call (865) 673-FORT (3678).



Heart patient Carol Grahl builds her strength with the Cardiac Rehabilitation Program at Fort Sanders Regional.

## Build your heart muscle at Fort Sanders Cardiac Rehab Center

After heart attack, heart surgery or angioplasty, cardiac patients at Fort Sanders Regional Medical Center are referred to its Cardiac Rehabilitation Center.

The three-month program involves exercise sessions and health classes to establish lifestyle changes that help reduce the patient's risk of further heart disease.

"Cardiac Rehabilitation is a multidisciplinary treatment plan which involves medication, nursing, exercise physiology, nutrition and psychology. Lifestyle changes are difficult, so we're trying to provide people support so they can change," explains Cardiac Rehab manager Brenda Leuthold.

Patients exercise three times each week while hooked to a heart monitor. They also attend 16 different classes on nutrition, stress management and medications.

"That's long enough to help get habits formed," says Leuthold.

After completing the rehab program, patients are invited back to the center to continue exercising. The center has exercise bikes, step machines, treadmills and free weights.

"I think it's a wonderful support group for anybody that's had heart disease or heart procedures," says Leuthold. "We have a lot of great outcomes."

One of those is Charlie Morgan, a Knoxville businessman (see accompanying article), who was treated at the center after a heart attack in June 2010.

"The care at the Cardiac Center was excellent," says Morgan. "They're trying to teach you what to do, and it's very interesting to learn about your heart. I'm trying to do better with my diet and exercise, like they told me to do!"

For information about the Cardiac Rehabilitation Program at Fort Sanders Regional, please call (865) 541-1250.

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