

NEWS FROM FORT SANDERS REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER

A New Lease on Life

Darrell Wolfe's day started out much like any other. He completed a few household chores and headed off to work. "I mowed the yard that morning," says Wolfe. "I remember that it was very warm, and I felt a little funny when I arrived at work."

Wolfe says that he assumed he was just hot from having mowed the yard, so he tried to work through his discomfort. "I tried to keep working, but I finally had to stop and talk to my supervisor. I was burning up, my head felt funny, my left arm was hurting, and three of the fingers on my left hand went numb. I couldn't catch my breath, and my chest felt like something was squeezing it."

Wolfe had suffered a heart attack in 1994 and believed he

was having another. "I told my supervisor, 'I don't feel too good.' He said, 'You don't look too good, either,'" Wolfe recalls with a laugh. Recognizing the seriousness of the situation, his supervisor called 911.

Darrell was transported to Fort Sanders Regional Medical Center by a Rural/Metro ambulance equipped with new technology that allowed the ambulance crew to collect EKG and other heart information and transmit it directly to the hospital while the ambulance was en route.

When Wolfe arrived at the hospital, he was met by cardiologist Mike Ayres, the doctor who successfully treated him in 1994. Dr. Ayres had Wolfe taken directly to the cath (cardiac catheterization) lab. The



"I was burning up, my head felt funny, my left arm was hurting."

Heart attack survivor Darrell Wolfe now walks his beagle, Smokey, every day. Wolfe credits Dr. Mike Ayres of Fort Sanders Regional Medical Center with saving his life and heeds the doctor's advice to improve his diet and get more exercise.

team opened his blocked artery in only 18 minutes, far better than the 90-minute time frame recommended by the American College of Cardiology and American Heart Association.

Fortunately for Wolfe, he recognized the signs and symptoms of his heart attack and quickly sought help. And he chose Fort Sanders, a hospital that has won national awards in recognition of its treatment of heart attack patients.

Wolfe is grateful to be alive, and is heeding his doctor's advice to live a healthier lifestyle. "I've changed my diet, and I'm walking more," says Wolfe. "I walk my beagle Smokey every day. It's good for him, too. He used to just stay in the house all day."

Door-to-Balloon Times Save Lives

During an acute heart attack every moment counts. Door-to-balloon time – the amount of time beginning when the patient arrives at the emergency room to the opening of the blocked artery causing the heart attack – is critical in these types of cases.

The "balloon" is a small catheter inserted into the blocked artery that feeds the heart muscle. The tip of the catheter inflates like a balloon, to enlarge the artery and restore blood flow to the heart.

So important is door-to-balloon time, in fact, that the American College of Cardiology and the American Heart Association have set guidelines recommending that patients undergo cardiac catheterization and have intervention performed so that

blood flow to the target artery is restored within 90 minutes for acute ST-elevation myocardial infarction (STEMI).

"Saving time saves heart muscle," says Fort Sanders Regional interventional cardiologist Dr. David Wood. "Every minute is crucial in saving the life of a cardiac patient. We're proud of the records we're setting, and the difference those records mean to our patients' lives."

In the last year, Fort Sanders Regional has set impressive door-to-balloon times of 14 minutes, 18 minutes, 20 minutes, and 23 minutes. For the first three quarters of 2009, the average door-to-balloon time was 57 minutes. Saving minutes saves heart muscle.

"Our goal is less than 90 minutes, but we usually are much faster than that," says Jennifer DeBow, Director of Cardiology Services. "Even patients transferred from other facilities such as Fort Sanders Sevier, have met the 90 minute goal, and that includes the patient's transfer time."

One reason for the improved times are a direct result of a new lifesaving mobile EKG data program installed in Rural/Metro ambulances that allows the ambulance crew to collect and transmit data directly to the Fort Sanders Regional emergency room while the ambulance is en route.

Having this information in advance allows the emergency department physician to make a preliminary diagnosis before the patient arrives. It avoids delays of registration and testing at the hospital. And, it gives time for the heart catheter lab team to assemble in advance of the patient's arrival. The new technology was launched in 2009.

The hospital's success isn't going unnoticed. The American College of Cardiology Foundation's NCDR ACTION Registry – GWTG recently awarded Fort Sanders Regional a 2008 Silver Performance Achievement Award, as well as a 2009 Gold Performance Achievement Award. These awards are given for proven sustained results in the performance related to these patients.



Heartburn or Heart Attack?

If you're experiencing an uncomfortable burning sensation in your chest and wondering if it's a result of the burritos you ate for lunch or something more serious, consider these questions:

- Are you sweaty?
- Do you have palpitations (an unusual awareness of the beating of the heart)?
- Do you have shortness of breath?

If the answer to any of the above questions is "yes," see a physician to make sure your problem is not heart-related.

Have a Healthy Heart

Following these tips will help reduce your risk of heart disease:

Don't smoke. Smokers are more than twice as likely to suffer a heart attack as non-smokers and are much more likely to die if they do have a heart attack.

Control high blood pressure. The systolic (upper number) should be less than 140 and the diastolic (lower number) less than 90.

Get active. Even activities like gardening or walking can help.

Eat right. Follow a heart-healthy diet low in fat and cholesterol that includes plenty of fruits and vegetables.

Achieve and maintain a healthy weight. Excess weight strains the heart and aggravates several other heart disease risk factors such as diabetes.

Manage stress and anger. Poorly controlled stress and anger can lead to heart attacks and strokes.

Control diabetes. If not properly controlled, diabetes can lead to significant heart damage, heart attack and death.



CENTER OF EXCELLENCE: CARDIOLOGY



At Fort Sanders, our team of experts in cardiology understand that time matters when it comes to the heart. Cardiologists, Interventional Cardiologists, and Cardiovascular and Thoracic Surgeons work together with our Emergency Room physicians and Rural Metro to ensure the best treatment is ready and waiting for each patient.

Finding it, fixing it, FAST
– that's Regional Excellence.