

Script – Print - A Life-Saving Lesson

A stroke turns a teacher into a student of lifestyle changes

As a dedicated special education teacher, Morgan Teske understands the challenges certain deficits can have on a person's life. That perspective helped him when he suffered a stroke one year ago.

Then 43, Teske said he wasn't feeling well when he passed out, fell and struck his head. His teen daughter called 9-1-1 and, recognizing symptoms of a stroke, EMT's rushed Teske to OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony Medical Center - the region's only Comprehensive Stroke Center.

"Every minute a stroke patient would lose two million neurons if they don't get the blood flow going again, says Dr. Akram Shhadeh, Vascular Neurology Surgeon at OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony Medical Center. "And so, no one should waste any time just to think. 'Let me wait until my symptoms resolve, it might go away', It's better to come to the emergency room and your symptoms go away then staying at home and they don't go away - then you cannot ask for help. Or you ask for help when it's too late."

Arriving with right side paralysis and an inability to speak, Teske was immediately treated by Dr. Shhadeh, surgeon colleague, Dr. Ayman Gheith and Saint Anthony's 24/7 neuro intervention team.

Though hindered by a damaged carotid artery, within minutes the stroke-causing clot on Teske's brain was removed. His recovery was immediate.

"I didn't have any deficits as far as my - the opposite side of my body, like speech and muscle control in my face and, like how I can move my hands and arms and legs and stuff," says stroke survivor Morgan Teske. "I was able to walk pretty much within three days. So, that was pretty amazing."

Teske still faced weeks of speech, physical and occupational therapy. Then there was the matter of the damaged carotid, in which, thanks to the patient's stroke procedure, was found to be developing an aneurysm.

Because the surgery to remove it came only a few months following his stroke, Teske was concerned. But that apprehension was erased thanks to the drawing of a few diagrams by Dr. Shhadeh.

"I was taking pictures of it and sending it to my friends, says stroke survivor Morgan Teske. "Because even though it made total sense how he explained it to us, it was kind of like if you sat down to follow a football play the first time and you never played football, it's kind of like that. So, I was getting the surgeon diagram of that, personally. And that was pretty amazing. That he took the time to do that. And it kind of calmed us down that I understood what they were going to do a little better."

An aneurysm in the carotid is a challenge, but less so with a new device called a 'pipeline flow diverter' used extensively by the Saint Anthony surgeons.

"Now, due to those devices, there's almost no single aneurysm that we cannot treat," says Dr. Akram Shhadeh, Vascular Neurology Surgeon at OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony Medical Center. "So, it covered that gap and our ability to treat all aneurysms. And so it mainly indicated for larger aneurysms. Those aneurysms with a wide neck or wide mouth and those aneurysms that causes the whole vessel to balloon out. We call them fusiform aneurysms."

The aneurysm was successfully removed and Teske's life is returning to normal. He admits, however, being much more conscious of his health - his diet - his exercise and - most importantly - his life.

"A lot more gratitude for the small things," says stroke survivor Morgan Teske. "Like every little thing and just like - also determination to, you know, try to make myself in peak health. And be there for my family in the long term."

The lesson for the rest of us?

Dr. Shhadeh suggests for aneurysms you need to research your family history.

"It's worth exploring their risk of carrying an aneurysm," says Dr. Akram Shhadeh, Vascular Neurology Surgeon at OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony Medical Center. "And because, again, a brain aneurysm is very devastating disease and it's worth spending every minute and every effort to try to find out whether any person has an aneurysm, or not, and treat it before a big disaster."

Having lost most of his last year, Teske is looking forward to the summer ahead. In addition to a family vacation, he plans to see a lot of concerts, including the Rolling Stones. That should provide some "satisfaction."