

BROADCAST- Lindsey Graham's death highlights rare heart emergency

ANCHOR LEAD-IN:

The reported death of U.S. Senator Lindsey Graham from an aortic dissection is drawing new attention to a rare but life-threatening medical emergency.

VO or RADIO PACKAGE

Graham died from an aortic dissection which happens when a tear develops in the wall of the body's largest artery, allowing blood to separate the layers of the vessel wall. OSF Cardiologist, Dr. Bill Novak the condition is uncommon, but it can quickly become fatal without immediate treatment.

SOT-Dr. Bill Novak

"The aorta is the main artery that leaves your heart, and if you have a tear in the aorta, it can be potentially life-threatening. It can cause a heart attack. It can cause stroke. It can cause heart failure, rupture of the aorta, and sudden death." (:18)

Symptoms can include sudden, extreme chest or back pain, shortness of breath and fainting. Aortic dissection can be misdiagnosed as a heart attack as it was for actor John Ritter. Emergency imaging is needed to confirm the diagnosis, and treatment may involve medication, surgery or a stent but minutes matter.

ANCHOR TAG:

Dr. Novak urges anyone with risk factors such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and plaque build-up in the arteries to seek emergency care immediately if they experience symptoms.