



Heart Attack Survivor Salutes WMH Cath Lab Staff

“I thought I could just walk it off.”

(Honesdale, June 3, 2021)... “I had a gas bubble in my chest, I wasn’t feeling too good but I thought I could just walk it off,” said Joanne Neville, RN. She shakes her head. “I was lucky I was at Wayne Memorial at the time. I was having a heart attack!”

Neville, a nursing supervisor at the hospital, was in a patient elevator when, according to co-worker Barb Richter, CNA, Neville began feeling chest pain. By the time she got back to her office, fellow RN Barb Piotrowski had to “throw me in a wheelchair and whisk me to the Emergency Department.” Patricia “Trish” Kuller, RN and Karen Fulmer, RN, stayed with Neville in the ED.

That was back in August of 2020. Neville wound up in the hospital’s Heart & Vascular Center, a cardiac catheterization laboratory celebrating five years this month. She called her husband to come to the hospital immediately. “I felt like maybe I was going to die,” she recalled. Neville had had a type of heart attack called a “Non-Stemi” or Non-ST-elevation myocardial infarction, often referred to as a “mild heart attack.” It can still do serious damage, however, and Neville admits she was lucky.

“Doctor Hassan (Walid Hassan, MD) found a blockage in my left anterior descending (LAD) artery and put in a stent,” Neville said. The LAD artery carries fresh blood into

the heart giving the heart the oxygen it needs to pump properly. If it's blocked, the heart can stop very fast — which is why this type of heart attack is also sometimes called a “widow-maker.”

Neville is one of more than 1500 patients who have been treated in the Heart & Vascular Center since it opened in June of 2016.

The Moscow wife and mother had nothing but praise for the staff. “Frank and Holly and Dr. Hassan, along with Colleen -- they all helped me go through this.” Frank Reid, RN, is the Cath Lab’s Coordinator. Holly Miszler, RN and Colleen Shaffer, RN have all been on the Cath lab team since day one. Fellow nursing supervisor Patricia “Trish” Alessi, RN, was also on hand, said Neville, “in the Cath Lab control room to just keep reassuring me.” Walid Hassan, MD, MACP, FRCP (UK), FAHA, FACC, FCCP, FSCAI, FSVM is the Medical Director of the Heart & Vascular Center.

"The type of heart attack experienced by Joanne is not all that uncommon and without the appropriate response it can be deadly," said Dr. Hassan. "It's important for people to listen to their bodies and seek help when they have any kind of chest pain. We highly recommend an individual promptly seeks medical evaluation once he or she perceives chest pain, shortness of breathing or palpitation"

Neville said she may have had a portent about things to come before her heart attack.

“I was on a walk with my husband two months earlier when I had tightness in the right side of my throat and wasn’t able to take a deep breath,” Neville recalled, “and, a few days before my heart attack, something similar happened. Looking back, I believe now that these were warning signs.”

Neville did go to her primary care provider at the time, thinking it was perhaps her thyroid that was acting up. Tests proved inconclusive.

“While I happen to work at the hospital, it’s really a blessing that we have such a skilled cardiac team in our community,” stated Neville, “they got me in very quickly. I certainly wasn’t going to ‘walk off’ this event!”

Neville completed a cardiac rehabilitation program at Wayne Memorial afterwards and began a mostly-plant based diet on which she has lost 25 pounds.

“The cardiac rehab team – Nadine Greco, MS and registered nurses Ann Marie Didato and Carol Jackson—were great,” she said, adding, “All of this was quite an eye-opener. You never think it’s going to happen to you until it does.”

For more information about the Heart & Vascular Center, visit [Cardiac Catheterization & PCI | Wayne Memorial Hospital \(wmh.org\)](https://www.wmh.org)



Joanne in the Cardiac Rehabilitation unit (above) and below with the Cardiac Rehab staff, left to right: Anne Marie Didato, RN; Nadine Greco, MS; Carol Jackson, RN.



