



George Kroncke

**Emergency Department &
Cardiac Cath Lab**

“People need to know how lucky we are that we have the cath lab.”

For Cheri and George Kroncke, Valentine's Day 2020 is a day they will never forget, but it's not for the reason you might think. Instead of a romantic evening at home, the Kronckes spent the night in the emergency room, preparing for a different kind of heart to heart.

Message from the heart

It's true that on February 14, 2020, George Kroncke's day centered on hearts. But it wasn't the kind stamped with whimsical messages or one made of cardboard and filled with chocolate. It was a heart that was hindered by two blockages and desperately in need of blood flow.

As George was mowing the yard late in the afternoon, he began to feel strange. Thinking he just needed to cool off, he decided to take a water break.

"I felt kind of weird, so like a typical male, I went inside and sat down. I had a bottle of water and decided about 45 minutes later to go finish. I went back out and made it about two minutes before realizing something wasn't right," said George.

When George's wife arrived home, they debated on whether or not it was a true emergency. Thankfully, they chose correctly. Together, the Kronckes decided they needed to take action and sought medical care at Hunt Regional Medical Center in Greenville.

"When you walk in at a relatively young age with heart issues, they take things seriously. They got me right back into a room, started hooking the EKG up, and began drawing blood," said George.

That's when his suspicion that something was wrong was confirmed. George was having a heart attack.

On-screen tune-up

When George arrived in the cardiac catheterization lab, he was met by Dr. Roger Belbel, interventional cardiologist, and the cath lab staff, who told George what to expect.

"They were very upfront, which I like. I don't need anything sugarcoated," said George.

"He told me, 'You're hoping that I have you on the table for 45 minutes to an hour and a half. That means that I can take care of whatever you need,'" recalls George.

Knowing that a shorter procedure would mean his condition was more serious and would require surgery, George watched as Dr. Belbel began the process of examining his heart.

Cardiac catheterization is used during a heart attack to eliminate blockages and restore normal blood flow to the heart. A cardiac cath does this by mapping out the inside of a heart's arteries using advanced imaging technology. If an artery is blocked, a small balloon—or stent—is placed to allow blood flow to return to normal.

While some patients might find the prospect of being awake while a doctor investigates your cardiac arteries unnerving, George found the process fascinating.

“I can't speak highly enough about the cath lab. It's a hidden gem.”

“There was zero pain. I'm very much a hands-on person when I teach, and I love technology so I found the cath lab very interesting. I could see the blockages and I could listen to them debate on what size stents to put in and how far they needed to put them,” said George.

An automotive technology teacher at Greenville High School, George also serves as coach of the robotics and solar car teams. He even helped name “Dr. Wrangler,” Hunt Regional's Stryker Mako orthopedic surgery robot.

“He was obviously teaching someone, which I thought was great because that's the only way to

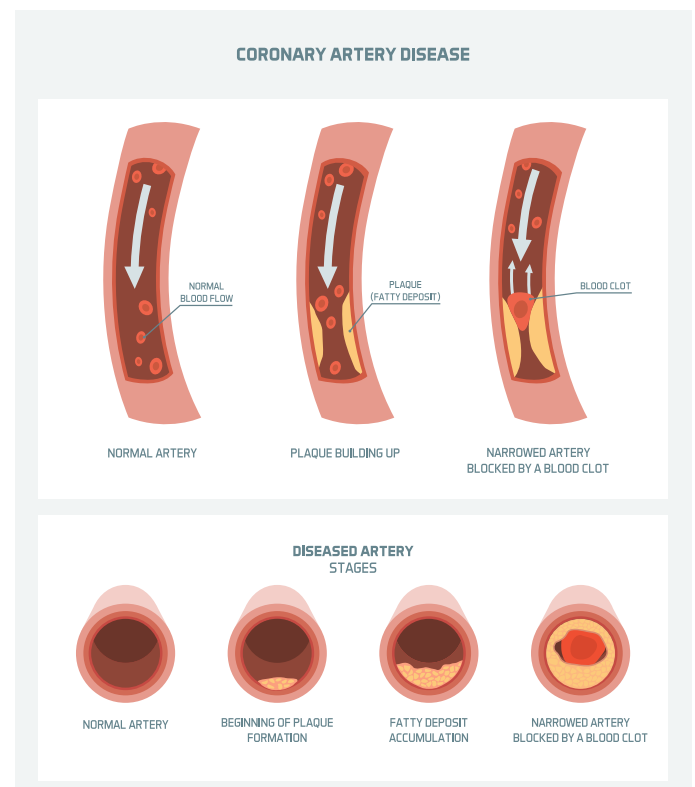
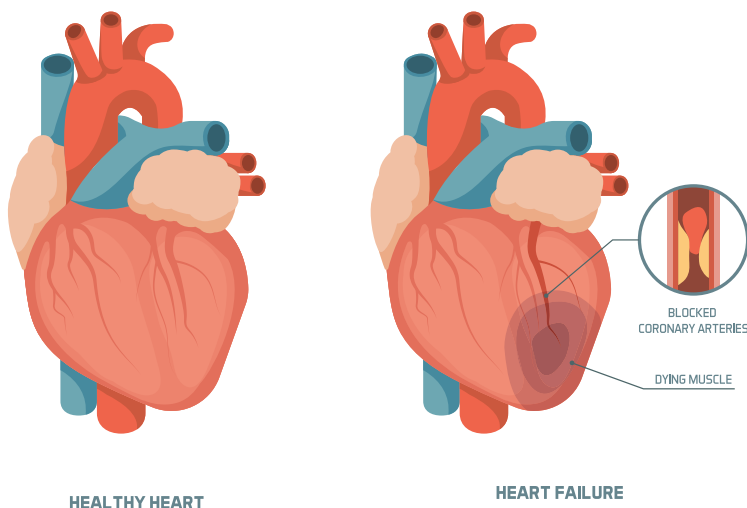
learn. They had to remind me multiple times to quit moving around because I thoroughly enjoyed watching it on the TV,” said George.

Two of George's arteries showed 99 and 90 percent blockage, requiring the placement of two stents. His decision to seek care had been the right one and had most likely saved his life.

Heart education

Following the successful stenting, George stayed overnight to monitor his condition.

During his stay, George met with nutrition specialist,



Alexandria Anderson, RD, LD, who gave him realistic tips for healthy living.

“I really enjoyed meeting with the nutritionist. She came in and gave practical advice like taking my body type into consideration, using your wrist size, and having twice as many vegetables. She was very, very good,” said George.

Nobody enjoys a stay in the hospital, but George says he is thankful for the care he received, from the original x-rays in the ER, to the cath lab, and the third floor medical staff.

“The nurses on the third floor were phenomenal. Even the phlebotomists—I call them the vampires—were great. The care was outstanding,” said George.

After a short rest, George began the work of

“Since the heart attack, I watch my diet. I try and stay away from the bad stuff unless it's a special occasion,” said George.

“I walk a lot. That's key for me. So far I've had good checkups,” he said.

Care within reach

Now almost nine months out, George is back in action and feeling good, teaching at GHS and enjoying his newly restored heart with his family.

“I can't speak highly enough about the cath lab. It's a hidden gem,” said George.

Although the process is not one he wishes to relive, George says he is thankful that the cardiopulmonary team—and the cath lab in particular—were there

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strengthening his heart through the Mary Rich-Lynch Cardiac Rehabilitation Program at Hunt Regional Medical Center.

“The ladies in the rehab center, especially Elizabeth and Heather, are exceptional. The monitoring and their care was great. I have nothing but great things to say about them,” said George.

The outpatient program, which is certified by the American Association of Cardiovascular and Pulmonary Rehabilitation (AACVPR), includes up to 12 weeks of physician-supervised exercise and education sessions which help patients adapt to a new, healthier lifestyle and make lasting changes to reduce the risk of future heart problems.

when he needed them.

“I'm a longtime Greenville boy and have been in Greenville for 41 years. People need to know how lucky we are that we have the cath lab and the doctors along with the technicians. Not having to get transported to Dallas and getting that fixed at home was priceless,” said George.

“The cath lab was and is a hidden treasure,” he said.

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