

Total Artificial Heart Patient Receives Donor Heart 15 Years After Decision to Donate Wife's Organs

The Associated Press

Gregory Welsh, 47, is a compelling example of the life-changing importance of organ donation.

Following a car accident in 1996, he made the decision to donate his wife's organs in hopes of helping others. Fifteen years later, Mr.

Welsh's gift came full circle when he received a donor heart transplant after 120 days of life with the SynCardia temporary Total Artificial Heart.

(Photo: <http://photos.prnewswire.com/prnh/20120215/LA53807>) "It's a miracle I got this heart and I'm going to do everything I can to take care of it," said Mr. Welsh. "I got a second chance and that means something to me." On Jan. 14, 2011, Mr. Welsh went to his local urgent care center with flu-like symptoms. Medical staff discovered he had arrhythmias and a resting heart rate of 190. He was immediately taken to the nearest emergency room by ambulance, but 15 minutes after his arrival, Mr.

Welsh went into cardiac arrest.

"I woke up 10 days later with a SynCardia Total Artificial Heart," said Mr. Welsh. "Doctors told me I'd had a major blockage in all four of my heart chambers and had suffered a heart attack. Only about 20 percent of my heart was working." After a month of recovery from his implant surgery, Mr. Welsh's doctors offered him the opportunity to switch from the 418-pound "Big Blue" hospital driver that powered his Total Artificial Heart to the 13.5-pound Freedom@ portable driver. This smaller, wearable power supply, which is currently undergoing an FDA clinical study, allowed him to be discharged from the hospital to wait for a matching donor heart at home on Feb. 18, 2011.

"Life at home was really very good," said Mr. Welsh. "My 24-year-old daughter Cassandra was instrumental in helping me. She did all of my dressing changes when I came home, twice a day at first, while at the same time completing her master's to become a teacher. Today, she's teaching 5th grade. I'm her only surviving parent because her mom was killed in a car accident 15 years ago. I made the choice to donate her mother's organs, so I've seen both sides of the donor network now." After three months of life at home with the Freedom driver, Mr. Welsh received his matching donor heart on May 18, 2011.

"When they told me a donor heart was available, I was really happy but also scared at the same time," said Mr. Welsh. "At one point, they started talking to me about the anti-rejection medications and how your immune system can be compromised. I

Total Artificial Heart Patient Receives Donor Heart 15 Years After Decision

Published on Medical Design Technology (<http://www.mdtmag.com>)

thought, do I really want to do this? If the driver was a little smaller and less noisy, I could live with this thing. That's how comfortable I got with the Total Artificial Heart." Today, Mr. Welsh says he is "addicted to the gym" and often walks 2 to 4 miles a day. He has also returned to work part-time as a computer-aided drafter for a local engineering firm and hopes to return full-time very soon.

"My life so far post-transplant has been wonderful," said Mr. Welsh.

"What the Total Artificial Heart does is amazing. It will keep you alive, make you feel better and allow you to build strength for your transplant." To learn more about becoming an organ donor, please visit <http://www.organdonor.gov>.

CAUTION - The Freedom@ portable driver is an investigational device, limited by United States law to investigational use.

About the SynCardia temporary Total Artificial Heart SynCardia Systems, Inc. (Tucson, AZ) is the privately-held manufacturer of the world's first and only FDA, Health Canada and CE approved Total Artificial Heart. Originally used as a permanent replacement heart, SynCardia's Total Artificial Heart is currently approved as a bridge to transplant for people dying from end-stage biventricular heart failure. There have been more than 950 implants of the Total Artificial Heart, accounting for more than 230 patient years of life.

Similar to a heart transplant, SynCardia's Total Artificial Heart replaces both failing heart ventricles and the four heart valves, eliminating the symptoms and source of end-stage biventricular failure. Unlike a donor heart, the Total Artificial Heart is immediately available at SynCardia Certified Centers and does not require expensive anti-rejection medication, which can cause subsequent complications. It is the only device that provides immediate, safe blood flow of up to 9.5 liters per minute through both ventricles. This high volume of safe blood flow helps speed the recovery of vital organs, helping make the patient a better transplant candidate.

SynCardia Ranked #20 Among World's 50 Most Innovative Companies In March 2011, Fast Company magazine ranked SynCardia #20 in its annual list of the "World's 50 Most Innovative Companies" for "giving mobility to artificial heart recipients." Weighing 13.5 pounds, SynCardia's Freedom@ portable driver is the world's first wearable driver designed to power the Total Artificial Heart both inside and outside the hospital. The Freedom driver is CE approved for use in Europe and undergoing an FDA-approved Investigational Device Exemption (IDE) clinical study in the U.S.

For up-to-date information, please visit: <http://www.syncardia.com> Like SynCardia on Facebook Follow SynCardia on Twitter - @SynCardia Connect with SynCardia on LinkedIn SOURCE SynCardia Systems, Inc.

-0- 02/15/2012 /CONTACT: Don Isaacs, Vice President of Communications, SynCardia Systems, Inc., +1-520-955-0660, disaacs@syncardia.com /Photo: <http://photos.prnewswire.com/prnh/20120215/LA53807> PRN Photo Desk, photodesk@prnewswire.com /Web Site: <http://www.syncardia.com> CO: SynCardia

Total Artificial Heart Patient Receives Donor Heart 15 Years After Decision

Published on Medical Design Technology (<http://www.mdtmag.com>)

Systems, Inc.

ST: Arizona IN: HEA MEQ SU: DIS PRN -- LA53807 -- 0000 02/15/2012 13:05:00 EDT
<http://www.prnewswire.c>

Source URL (retrieved on 03/06/2015 - 3:01am):

http://www.mdtmag.com/news/2012/02/total-artificial-heart-patient-receives-donor-heart-15-years-after-decision-donate-wifes-organs?qt-video_of_the_day=0