

Faye Merritt

67 years old

Faye Merritt, a sixty-seven-year-old grandmother of two, flew in from St. Louis for her granddaughter's birthday in Lawrence, Kansas. She had been told by her physician three months prior to her visit that she was quite healthy. She was on no medicines other than a daily aspirin. The birthday party was over, and Faye was preparing to fly home.



Faye: It was Thursday, February 3, and I was preparing to leave. I had slept in my grandson's lower bunk bed at his request. I got out of bed and told him it was time for me to get ready for my trip back to St. Louis. As I started to walk to the bathroom, I got a cramp in my right leg and fell to the floor. My grandson watched me from his top bunk perch as I fell. I assured him that I was okay and started to push up from the floor. I had no feeling whatsoever in my left hand. I rolled over on my left side and went limp. At this point, my grandson ran to get his parents. I told him I was okay and that there was no need to bother his parents.

My son-in-law, a physician, did a quick exam and told my daughter, "I think your mom is having a stroke. Call 911!" He directed the first responders to the Stroke Center: "Take her to Kansas City, Saint Luke's, because they have a stroke center!"

Her son-in-law's immediate recognition that this was a stroke and his request that Faye be taken to Saint Luke's Stroke

Center bypassed much of the common initial confusion described in many of these stories. Faye remembers most of the reversal process upon arrival at Saint Luke's Stroke Center.

Faye: I was fully awake. The neurointerventional radiologist told me what to do, starting with taking some deep breaths. He performed the corkscrew procedure. He went through the right groin and up into my brain to find the clot. He was fantastic. It was unreal. I did not feel anything. He kept telling me to take deep breaths in and to breathe out. And then he said: "I got it on the first try! It's over!" He showed me the clot; it was a big. It looked like a big slice of cranberry sauce. It was over!

Faye was transferred to the Intensive Care Unit after the procedure.

Faye: They watched me very carefully that first night. Every hour they asked me to squeeze my left hand. They asked me the name of the president of the United States, what day it was and so forth. I kept getting stronger and stronger. The next day I was squeezing their arms, lifting my left leg and doing everything I was supposed to do. I consider it a miracle and I thank God I was at Saint Luke's Stroke Center. My left side was a little drooped in the ICU but by the next morning, it went right back up.

The search for a clot source was unsuccessful. A cholesterol plaque in the brain artery was felt to be the most likely cause of Faye's stroke.

Faye: They saw some cholesterol plaques that might have shaken loose and they also found that my triglycerides were high. Everything else was okay. They put me on medicine to help lower my cholesterol after the stroke reversal.

It was quite a surprise to Faye that she had a stroke. She had none of the risk factors and considered herself quite healthy.

Faye: I exercise and I've never had any problems with my health until this stroke. I had a physical three months earlier and everything was fine, except the doctor did say, "Your bad cholesterol is a little high. We might want to watch that." [The bad cholesterol is the LDL and it should be less than 100.]

Faye's medical status after her stroke reversal has been smooth and she does not report any disabilities.

Faye: My memory is fine and I don't have slurred speech. Nothing has really hit me. Somebody from the physical therapy department visited me three times at my daughter's home in Lawrence and then they said I could go back to St. Louis because I was okay. After I got home, I noticed that my writing was a little sloppy, but it got better as the weeks went by.

My daughter says it was a miracle – someone was watching over me. I was so lucky to have popped right back up after the stroke intervention. I was lucky to be in Kansas City where they have Saint Luke's Stroke Center.

COMMENTS

Faye was fortunate that her son-in-law identified the stroke so quickly and had her transported to the Stroke Center immediately. That way the problems associated with stroke diagnosis and the common time delays were avoided. If the stroke reversal is performed soon after the onset of the stroke, the outcome is nearly always better than if any delay is encountered.