

Advance Care Planning...Let Your Family Know What You Want

“When this happens suddenly without a plan, it can create chaos and confusion in any family. The only way your loved ones can be assured that their wants are fulfilled is through advanced care planning.” states Kathryn Hart of Detroit Lakes, MN.

On March 4, 2017, I brought my husband, who was 35 years old at the time, into the ER following a diagnosis of pneumonia the previous day. He was immediately intubated and flown to Fargo, ND, from Perham, MN. It was there that the Intensivist reported that he did not know what was going on, but that they were going to start with the heart and go from there.

Shortly after, we were met by a cardiologist who explained that my husband needed a balloon pump and life support so that the University of Minnesota would accept him as a patient in their cardiac ICU. The cardiologist told us he likely would not make it through the initial surgery, and if he did, he would be lucky to make the transport to Minneapolis.



We are so lucky that we made it to the University of Minnesota! My husband was in a medical-induced coma on full life support for the next two weeks. As a family, we were faced with the decision of a Left Ventricular Assist Device, LVAD, or a mechanical pump that is run with power and two batteries. He had no other options. This is a huge risky invasive surgery, but it was one that would save my husband’s life.

Luckily, I had conversations with my husband about advance care planning earlier as I am a certified advance care planning facilitator. Unfortunately, my husband thought it was silly to write his wishes down and make an official plan.

We were lucky on one hand because I was confident he would want all life-saving measures, but I was stressed in an already chaotic time, because this hadn’t been communicated to the rest of his family.

Today, we are all feeling so lucky! John woke up last year on St. Patrick’s Day! He just had a one-year checkup and is doing well on the LVAD. He had a 5 out of 60 ejection fraction when he had the LVAD placed. He now has a 45-50 out of 60 ejection fraction. My husband is looking at being a candidate for the LVAD healing his heart. When we were presented with the LVAD, we were told it would be a bridge to transplant or a destination therapy for life. I could not have imagined one year ago that this would be our scenario today. Please do not delay...get your advance care plan completed today!

For More Information

For more information about National Healthcare Decisions Day, visit their website at <https://www.nhdd.org/>. For local assistance about advance healthcare directives, visit Honoring Choices ND, <https://www.honoringchoicesnd.org/>, or Honoring Choices MN, <http://www.honoringchoices.org/>.