

PATIENT: Richard Graves

Age 69, Concord, NH

FAMILY: 2 daughters and wife Martha

SURGERY: Open heart surgery

Richard Graves is a retired truck driver who suffered a heart attack in the mid-1990s. There had been no prior symptoms. There was no reason to believe the severe chest pain he felt one day was anything more than indigestion. "I was lying on the floor in agony, and my wife decided to take me to Concord Hospital for tests," he remembers. It was a good decision.

A standard stress test alarmed Concord Hospital Cardiac Associates cardiologist Dr. Don Chan. "In the middle of the test, Dr. Chan suddenly told me to stop. He literally didn't want me to make another motion." Once Richard's heart slowed, Dr. Chan told him that he had three-way multiple blockages and needed surgery. A Concord Hospital cardiothoracic surgeon performed the surgery, utilizing Richard's own internal mammary artery to repair two of the blockages. Richard returned home just a few days later.

"The doctors were great at explaining everything that was happening to me," Richard recalls. "They set my mind at ease." Richard felt fully engaged and educated about his condition and his treatment. Even with the advantage of a daughter who works as a cardiac nurse, Richard appreciated the efforts of the team in making sure he understood the surgical and rehabilitation process. "The way the doctors and staff communicate to patients at Concord Hospital is really good news for cardiac patients, especially those who don't have family members working in the field," he added.

In 2005 Richard participated in the Concord Hospital Cardiac Rehabilitation program for two weeks. "It was a great group," he stated, "The people who ran it were fantastic. They fully explained everything, and the health talks were wonderful. I always felt extremely well cared for." As a result of his experiences, Richard joined the Concord Hospital Peer Mentor program, where he has met many new friends and volunteers while visiting patients both preparing, and recovering from, heart surgery.

As a Cardiac Peer Mentor, Richard says he just keeps learning. "It's so enjoyable because we can share what happened in our lives, and in our surgeries," he explains. "Most patients love to see you come in and they have lots of questions. My visits always seem to mean a lot to their families as well." Trust is an important part of the Cardiac Peer Mentor program, and Richard notes that this trust is equally shared, "It has been rewarding and fulfilling for me as well." As for Concord Hospital, he emphasized, "I wouldn't trust my heart to any other place."

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