

Shannon Shivers - ADULT FMD

Feb. 16, 2008 was a day that can be recorded as a day of miracles!

I was 31 (now 32 since November), training for a half-marathon, and had received top reports from my yearly physical just 2 weeks before.

I woke up that Saturday morning and stumbled my way to the bathroom, almost making it there, falling in the doorway! I could not pull myself up and didn't understand what was going on. I had to call my 4-year-old son, my hero, and tell him to go get mommy the phone and a pillow and blanket, because I was freezing!



He brought the phone, and I called my husband at work. I didn't call 911 because I didn't know what was going on and didn't want to scare the children. He answered saying how surprised he was I caught him because he hadn't been in the office all morning!

He heard it in my voice. My speech was slurred and he knew immediately that something was terribly wrong. He was on his way and called 911 and his parents on the way home.

By warming up, I was able to get up and make it to the den, but that would be it. I was paralyzed completely on my left side. Danny made it home in record time, his parents made it over to pick up the children before the ambulance came, and the ambulance soon followed. I arrived at the hospital with complete awareness of everything that was going on. Long enough to hear the doctor verify that I was having a stroke. I then had a grand mal seizure.

The Dilantin they administered pretty much spaced me out from then on. The doctors had told Danny that the seizure would prevent me from receiving the medication used to stop the stroke and there was nothing else they could do. Danny just said that wasn't acceptable!

The ER doctor, thankfully, had the number of a neurologist that he thought could help. He was training for a marathon, and they called him in on a Saturday in his running clothes! They confirmed that my right carotid artery had dissected 100% and the doctor's suggestion to Danny for any hope was surgery. He signed the consent and they took me into surgery for 6 1/2 hours to place 2 5mm metal stents in my carotid arteries through my femoral arteries! Amazing!

I woke up after the surgery with complete feeling on my left side! The paralysis had left me and I was going to be ok, with no therapy at all. Still in ICU on day 2 with the catheters still in my arteries, the doctor came in and told me I wasn't going to get any running done like that! My family's jaw dropped at the thought of me running after that, but he said I could run when I felt like it and expected to see pictures of the marathon.

I left the hospital 4 days after having the stroke, ran my first mile one week after, and ran a 5K three weeks after the stroke! I just completed the half-marathon on Dec. 6 and am now training for a 25K in February to mark the one year anniversary after the stroke!

I showed up to my post-op appointment 10 days after the stroke and was told by the doctor I was very lucky to be here and should be in the nursing home with a feeding tube! He also told me that I have Fibromuscular Dysplasia of the carotids. After 6 months of taking Plavix to help protect the stents while healing, I had an angiogram that confirmed they were doing their job and I'm now off of the Plavix. I take a daily aspirin, but that's it! I have had grand mal seizures in the past. I have tinnitus, and experience quite a bit of dizziness. A small price to pay for a second chance at life!

I am very blessed to be here, and miracles do happen! I can only pray my story will help others to know that being diagnosed with FMD doesn't mean you have to stop living!