



AED Saves Centre Club Member's Life on his way to a treadmill workout

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It was a weekday morning like any other for Bill Cecil of Libertyville as he arrived at Centre Club for his daily workout. He checked in at the front desk, put his things away in the locker room, then walked out to the exercise area for his usual 30 minutes on the treadmill.

A retired U.S. Navy commander and former industrial engineer for Abbott Labs, Cecil, 76, a longtime member of

Centre Club in Libertyville, works out five mornings a week on the treadmill and strength training machines. During this particular visit last May, however, his workout was cut short when his heart began beating irregularly, causing him to lose consciousness and collapse to the floor.

Hurrying to the scene, Allen examined Cecil closely and realized it was a serious situation. Cecil's eyes were open but glazed and unfocused as he lay on the floor face down and turned to one side. Allen quickly dialed for assistance, then ran back to take care of Cecil. In the meantime, another staff member and an off-duty paramedic the Lake Forest Fire Department turned Cecil over and noticed a bleeding gash over his eye. Checking for vital signs, they also realized Cecil had no pulse.

Cecil's skin had turned a purplish gray as Larry Scire, head of Sports Medicine, and physician Laum Krimmerman, MD, began CPR. When an automated external defibrillator (AED) was delivered moments later as part of Centre Club's emergency plan, a member of Condell's Cardiac Rehabilitation Team hooked it up to Cecil.

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An AED is a simple, portable version of the complicated high-tech shock devices (called conventional or manual defibrillators) used in emergency rooms and hospitals to revive patients who go into cardiac arrest. Operating a manual defibrillator requires a great deal of training and expertise -- but an AED can be operated by almost anyone.

AEDs automatically analyze the patient's heart rhythm and prompt users with instructions at the appropriate time. An AED won't shock a healthy heart, and it takes little training to learn to place two big sticky patches on the chest, turn the AED on and listen for instructions regarding whether a shock is needed, and if so, when.

Condell Medical Center donated AEDs last year to police departments in Vernon Hills, Hawthorn Woods, Grayslake, Round Lake, Lake Forest, Libertyville, Mundelein and Wauconda and provided free training for officers. Because police officers often respond first to accident and emergency scenes, an AED makes it possible to save a life before paramedics have a chance to arrive. Centre Clubs in Libertyville and Gurnee replaced the more complex defibrillators with AEDs in 2001, and all managers are trained and certified to use them.

When it comes to cardiac emergencies, seconds count and can mean the difference between life and death. AEDs help to stabilize a patient until paramedics can arrive. Although the CPR routine of blowing air into a person's mouth and pressing on their chest keeps oxygen flowing to the brain and blood circulating in the body, only a defibrillator can deliver the critical electric shock to restart a heart that has gone into ventricular fibrillation, the condition experienced by Cecil.

During ventricular fibrillation, electrical signals move chaotically through the heart, preventing it from pumping blood properly. Compromised pumping of blood causes most people, like Cecil, to lose consciousness suddenly. If left untreated, ventricular fibrillation can lead to sudden cardiac death caused by an abrupt loss of heart function. Each minute of delay before defibrillation reduces survival by 10 percent.

With the AED's electrode pads in place on Cecil's chest, CPR continued. Although Cecil's heart was working feverishly hard, the quivering, abnormal rhythm rendered it incapable of pumping oxygen-rich blood to itself or through the rest of the body, which prompted the AED to request a shock that was administered with the push of a button.

When paramedics from the Libertyville Fire Department arrived, they placed a breathing tube in Cecil's throat, then transported him next door to the Emergency Department at Condell Medical Center. As they carried him to the ambulance, Cecil was breathing and his heart was pumping, thanks to the efforts of the Centre Club staff, paramedics and the AED.

"My only memories of that day were leaving my house to go to Centre Club, then waking up in a hospital bed at Condell with my daughter at my side," Cecil said. "When I woke up, I couldn't remember what happened to me, but I quickly began to put the pieces together, knowing it couldn't have been good."

Damaged heart tissue from a heart attack in December 1998 most likely caused Cecil's heart to go into fibrillation, according to Marcie Berger, MD, an electrophysiologist on staff at Condell, who implanted an internal cardioverter device (ICD), in Cecil's chest to prevent any future episodes of ventricular fibrillation.

An ICD is a device smaller than a pager that is implanted just under the skin through a small incision near the collarbone. It constantly monitors the rhythm of the heart, looking for rapid, chaotic arrhythmias. If such an irregular rhythm begins, the ICD automatically delivers a lifesaving shock, restoring normal heart rhythm and preventing sudden cardiac death. In 2001 approximately 50,000 patients in the United States received ICDs.

Just one month after his cardiac event, Cecil said, "There are no words to adequately describe the professionalism of the staff at Centre Club. Had it not been for their quick action and competence, I'm not sure I would be alive today."

Fitness director Steve Allen also believes Cecil's own commitment to personal fitness helped him to survive his cardiac event. "I honestly think his dedication really helped him," Allen said, adding, "and there he was right back on that treadmill about three weeks later, looking good, as though nothing had happened."

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About The Author:

Mark Harris is a successful author and regular contributor to <http://www.treadmill-ratings-n-reviews.com>. A buying guide and review of the top treadmills from leading manufacturers.

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