



[VIDEO TRANSCRIPT]

I am at Risk for Stroke. Are You?

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[CORIE]

When I was 26 years old, my dad suffered a massive ischemic stroke. He was 49 years old at the time. He was in relatively good health at that time – he did not drink, he did not smoke, he was active – but, his stress level was really high as a small business owner. On the day that my dad had his stroke, he had been to the doctor that morning, which really was not something that he did regularly. Literally, the day he had his stroke, at that doctor’s appointment, he found out that he had high blood pressure.

He survived what we call a massive stroke. He lost the use of his right side, which he regained over time. The stroke left him with a condition called aphasia. And aphasia is your cognitive ability to find your words, comprehend things, multitask, reading comprehension, counting money, just everyday activities.

Part of the reason that he recovered so well is that he had an incredible support system of therapists, medical providers, his family, his friends. It took him about a year to learn to walk again, to speak again, to just care for himself.

A lot of people assume that strokes only happen to the elderly; but, really, strokes in our case can strike at any age.

On January first of 2016, my mom also suffered a massive ischemic stroke. She was 69 years old at the time; but, she was not in the greatest of health. My dad called me. He didn’t know what to do because of the aphasia. So, I called 911. We were able to get her to the hospital and I was able to be there with her within an hour.

The result of my mom’s stroke has not been as happy of an ending as my dad’s. Because she did not regularly go to the doctor, she did not know that she had high blood pressure or high cholesterol. She was a smoker for 40 years. As a result, now she is in a wheelchair. She has lost the use of her right side completely. She’s no longer able to hold conversations, although she can understand and she says the word “yes” quite a bit. As a result she cannot do the things that a lot of people could do, like enjoy retirement or spend time being active with her grandchildren. We sold my parents’ business about a year after her stroke because together they could no longer maintain being self-employed.

When my mom had her stroke, she ruptured her carotid artery. So, the carotid artery is the major artery that carries blood from your heart to your brain. And you have two of them. And if you rupture one, you can survive with the second; but, if you rupture the second, that’s it.

My sister and I don’t have parents that we can call when we need advice. Our children don’t know what it’s like to grow up spending time regularly with grandparents like a lot of normal families do.

It is critically important to understand your family history. I am at risk because not only both of my parents have massive strokes, but my grandparents also had heart disease. My parents didn’t pay

attention to their risk. It's critically important to know my numbers, to keep my blood pressure down, to manage stress.

Our family story could have been different; but I am determined that I will not be next.

I won't be next.

Part of my story is a cautionary tale about understanding your family history, to prevent stroke so you can be present for your family. But another part of it is making sure that people understand that 80% of strokes can be prevented just by knowing your numbers and taking care of yourself, and having regular visits to a doctor. I have found an amazing team of care providers through the Med Center Health network. Individuals who help me with my primary care, heart and vascular preventative care with diagnostic imaging – and all of these people have come together to be a part of this wonderful team that I've been able to assemble to help me make sure that I live a long and healthy life.

I'm at risk for stroke. Are you?

[MUSIC]