

Kemph, Edward



THE HEART SCAN AT ELMHURST MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

A PATIENT'S STORY

:: WRITTEN BY KYLE BAUER
:: Photographer: Robert Randall Photography, Inc. © 2009.

There are only a few moments in a person's life that are so profound that they create a clear dividing line. From then on, everything else in one's life either happened before that time or after it. For Edward Kemph, the day he had his heart scan was one of those moments.

Forgive Edward Kemph if he was more than a little excited in the days following a procedure to place stents in two of his arteries. Being inactive just isn't in his nature, and the frustration of moving slowly for several years had gotten to the 30-year veteran of the Franklin Park Police Department.

"When I returned home from the hospital, I walked a mile," Kemph said. "The next day I walked another mile. A few days later, I got on my bike and rode a mile ... then I did two miles ... then I went a little farther. Later, my physicians had a talk with me because they said I was overdoing it, but I couldn't help it. It had been a long time since I was able to do anything like that."

Over the past few years, Kemph reached the point where walking more than a block was too taxing for him. He was diagnosed with peripheral arterial disease (PAD) and was taking medication but still experienced leg pain and shortness of breath on a regular basis. Previous stress tests never showed anything abnormal. It wasn't until he had a heart scan as part of the *Healthy Hearts for Police & Firefighters* program offered by Elmhurst Memorial Healthcare and Midwest Heart Specialists that the problem was identified.

"His calcium score from the heart scan was more than 2000," said Michael Brottman, M.D., a cardiologist with Midwest Heart Specialists and the Elmhurst Clinic. "We did an angiogram and discovered that

he had significant blockage in two of his arteries. The reason it wasn't identified earlier was that he had balanced ischemia, which can lead to a falsely normal stress test. After we put the stents in, he was like a new person."

As recently as a few months ago, Kemph was lamenting missed opportunities. Turning down invitations to spend time with his grandkids was becoming almost as painful as spending the day walking around the zoo with them. "I missed out on a lot because if a lot of walking was involved, I knew I couldn't do it," he said.

Now things are different. His leg pain has all but disappeared. So has his shortness of breath. Kemph is no longer a spectator watching from a distance as his grandkids grow up. He's even revisiting long-term plans that once seemed like pipe dreams.

"For a guy who is planning to retire next summer, I wasn't nearly as excited as I should have been," noted Kemph. "My wife and I used to talk about all of the things we wanted to do and all of the places we wanted to visit. But in the back of my mind I knew that wasn't possible. We had all of these great ideas, but I didn't think any of them would ever really happen. Now all of that has changed."

THE HEART SCAN

Kemph credits the coronary calcium scoring test at Elmhurst Memorial Healthcare with saving his life — it can save yours, too.

The test uses advanced 64-slice CT technology to let you know your risk of a heart attack so you can do something about it before it's too late. It is a simple, painless test that reveals the amount of calcium buildup in the arteries, which is a sign of heart disease.

The results of this test come in the form of a number score. The higher the number; the greater the likelihood of plaque buildup, thus the greater the risk of having a heart attack. This test is especially important for those who have any heart disease risk factors including family history, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, smoking and diabetes.

The hope for this test is that younger people with risk factors will use it to find out their risk early, so that there's time to improve their heart health.

CALL 630.782.7878 FOR MORE INFORMATION.

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Edward Kempf's angiogram showed significant blockage in two of his arteries. Previous stress tests produced falsely normal results, but a heart scan was able to detect the issue.

For several years, Edward Kempf had trouble walking more than a block without experiencing severe leg pain and shortness of breath. During an angiogram, it became evident why — he had significant blockage in two of his arteries. The heart scan alerted physicians to a potential problem, but why did previous stress test results come back normal?

“It’s called balanced ischemia, and it can be fairly common,” said Michael Brottman, M.D., a cardiologist with Midwest Heart Specialists and the Elmhurst Clinic. “What happens is there is an equal amount of blockage on both sides of the heart.”

A stress test looks for relative differences between the arteries. If blood flow is the same in the arteries, everything looks normal.

“Visualize three tubes going into three containers and then filling those containers with sand,” he said. “If you push the sand through all three tubes at the same time, you have an equal amount going into all the three containers. That’s normal blood flow.

“If you have a blockage in one tube, it will become narrower, so less sand will get through, and there’s obviously a problem,” Dr. Brottman continued. “But if all three tubes have narrowed, you will have the same amount of sand going into each container. There’s less sand than should be going in, but it’s the same amount in all three, so it looks normal. That’s balanced ischemia.”

To further complicate matters, Kempf had been diagnosed with peripheral arterial disease (PAD), had hypertension and elevated blood pressure, was diabetic and was a smoker — all of which could have contributed to his symptoms of leg pain and shortness of breath.

Using advanced 64-slice CT technology, the heart scan is a quick and painless test that reveals the amount of calcium buildup in the arteries. The greater the amount of calcium present, the greater the likelihood of heart disease. Following a heart scan, patients receive a coronary calcium score. A high score may be consistent with moderate to high risk of a heart attack in the next several years. With a score of 0, the presence of dangerous plaque is unlikely.

“A heart scan is a good starting point for someone concerned about heart disease,” Dr. Brottman said. “It is quick, noninvasive and will tell you if you are at risk. Depending on the results, the next step could be a stress test, which is more complicated, or an angiogram, which is an invasive procedure. If a stress test result is normal, that is usually a good indication of no major problems, and an angiogram would not be necessary. But when we see a coronary calcium score above 2000, plus several other risk factors, it is enough to prompt us to take the next step.”

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