



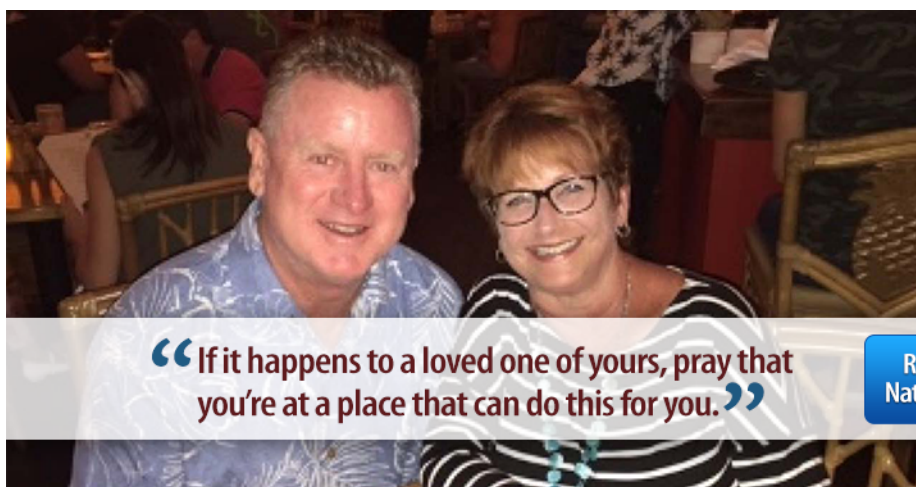
## **When the Stars Align**

### **Trained Surgeon + New Technology & Early Intervention Save Life of Patient with Hemorrhagic Stroke**

Posted by [NICO Corporation](#) Jun 01 2017

It was a perfectly normal day. Cathy Alexander was starting the new year by visiting her mom in Cleveland—two hours away from her home in Columbus, Ohio. They were having coffee and an enjoyable breakfast before Cathy would start on her way back home. Cathy's husband, Mike, was traveling in Alabama as part of his typical work demands.

Being away from home on that foggy, rainy winter day on Jan. 12 was not that unusual. Cathy visited her mom quite often. But this trip would end very different from past visits.



[Read Cathy's Story from National Stroke Association](#)

"She went to get up from the table and the plate she was holding dropped to the floor," said Cathy's mom, Lorre Andryszczyk. "There were no symptoms, no complaints, no signs of anything being wrong. Then she said, 'I hope I'm not having a stroke.' I immediately called 9-1-1."

Cleveland's mobile stroke unit responded to the call and Cathy had her first brain scan before reaching the hospital that was only minutes away. She arrived at the emergency department

awake, but confused and with difficulty speaking and moving the right side of her body.

Cathy had a hemorrhagic stroke with what a Cleveland hospital neurosurgeon called a medium to moderate size hemorrhage located deep in the basil ganglia area on the left side of her brain.

“This is an area where we have typically not been able to do surgery due to the deep location,” the neurosurgeon said. “But Cathy was absolutely the ideal candidate for a new surgical approach we had been using for about two years.”

Before surgery could begin, however, the neurosurgeon would need the approval of Cathy’s husband. Mike recalls the telephone conversation being very direct. “The options were to do nothing or consent to a new kind of brain surgery for stroke using new technology called [BrainPath](#).

“If they didn’t do the BrainPath procedure, I knew the outcome would not be good and this story would have a completely different ending,” Mike said. “So I agreed to the surgery. The nurse promised they would take really good care of Cathy, and I jumped on a plane for Cleveland.

The neurosurgeon had performed more than 60 surgeries using the BrainPath Approach, a minimally-disruptive kind of brain surgery that uses the NICO BrainPath to access the hematoma by creating a path through the natural folds of the brain to evacuate the clot. More than 5,000 surgical procedures have been performed using the technology, and this local hospital was among the first in the country to have the technology.

“I had very pessimistic thoughts during my time in flight,” Mike remembers. “I didn’t have any experience with stroke, but I knew this was serious. I wondered if I would ever see my wife alive again.”

As with any kind of stroke, time was precious. It was just over two hours after Cathy’s stroke when she was wheeled into the OR. The surgeon said before the availability of BrainPath, patients like Cathy would have been stabilized in the ICU and then a “watch and wait” approach would have been taken to allow the brain to absorb the blood.

“Many times this resulted in a long and drawn out recovery with complications that included brain swelling, possible surgery because of swelling and longer ICU stays,” said the surgeon. “Hemorrhagic stroke, even today, is not considered a surgical disease. But the BrainPath has given us the option to go after this kind of clot.



“We didn’t operate before,” he added. “Five years ago, I would not have operated at all on this kind of stroke. It’s taken us two years of using the system and getting comfortable. Now we’ve seen the results with BrainPath, and it’s really changing our thinking on this.”

Cathy’s surgery was completed in less than two hours. Cathy’s mom said the nurse gave her two thumbs up when they wheeled Cathy out of surgery.

“Cathy immediately smiled at us. She was talking and she recognized us,” Lorre said. “I knew then that my daughter would be fine.”

After surgery, the surgeon said he was really amazed at how well and how quickly Cathy was recovering. “As soon as she woke up, she was brighter and started to speak immediately. “Hemorrhagic stroke is a very, very difficult disease,” the surgeon said. “Some of the brain is always affected. Recovery of 100 percent is a lofty goal, but certainly, that’s what we are here to do.”

Cathy was in the hospital for nine days and rehabilitation for 17 days. “There hasn’t been one person who hasn’t been impressed and astonished at how well I’m doing,” Cathy said. “People say they don’t even know I’ve had a stroke.”

Mike attributes Cathy’s survival and recovery to a perfect alignment of the stars that day in January. If she wasn’t in Cleveland or if she had already left on the drive from Cleveland to Columbus – it’s nothing short of a miracle, he said.

“There’s no disputing that without the BrainPath procedure, our life would have been completely different – and not in a positive way,” Mike added. “The more I’ve checked into the procedure and talked about it, it’s fascinating to me. I take a look at Cathy today and we’re so blessed.”

Cathy is continuing therapy and goes once a week for rehabilitation. She says they tell her it will take one to two years to reach her plateau. But that’s not what Cathy believes.

“I’m going to set the new norm,” she said. “I’m on the road to normal. I’m living more independently than I thought I would. I’m really grateful for what I have, and it’s only been four months.”

Cathy has healed cosmetically, too. The small, one-inch incision has healed to be invisible, she said.

“As traumatic as this has been, it’s really quite fascinating,” Mike said. “If it happens to a loved one of yours, pray that you’re at a place that can do this for you. Literally, it’s that simple.

“I don’t want to sound cliché, but this technology and the choice to have surgical intervention has to become more available – this just has to become a more accepted procedure.”

*For more patient stories on [NICO BrainPath](http://www.niconeuro.com/patients/) visit [www.niconeuro.com/patients/](http://www.niconeuro.com/patients/).*