

3/22/2021

Dear Ascension NE Wisconsin – Mercy Campus,

My story is a long one and not over yet, but thanks to you, we are still on this journey.

I would like to thank the Ascension Mercy ICU and everyone associated with it, from the unit clerk (Jenna, Becca); the ICU Doctors: Dr. Zornosa, Dr. Roberts; the Infectious Diseases Doctor: Dr. Zeimet; the surgeon Dr. Foley; the nurses (I didn't begin to write down their names until well into the stay, but here are the ones I did: Rachelle, Craig, Kate, Paige, Karen, Katie, Shauna, Rose, Amy); the wound nurse Heather; the case manager: Vicki. These people kept my husband alive for 35 days in the ICU of which he was ventilated for 21 days and had a trach for 7. Let's not forget the fabulous job of the respiratory therapist (RT), and eventually the involvement of Speech, OT, and PT. Then there was the three day stay on the medical floor-Room 207 where the trach was pulled on hospital day 38, trach day 13. until he moved to the rehab unit. On hospital day 37 he moved to rehab, where they are preparing him to come home. I will not fail to mention the housekeeping staff-for without them, the rest of the staff could not have attended to my husband in a clean environment. It was a massive team effort. Today, March 22, is hospital day 44.

On January 31, 2021, my husband, Mark, came down sick with COVID-19 symptoms. On February 1, he tested positive. On February 7, I took him to the ER at Ascension St. Elizabeth in Appleton, from which he was transferred to the Ascension Mercy in Oshkosh. His condition worsened every day. In the meantime, my son (who lives with us) and I tested positive on February 9. My illness consisted of a bad deep cough, congestion and fatigue - I slept a lot. As I was getting worse and worse status updates from the hospital, I was fighting my own minor battle with COVID. This was a dark time as I was worried about and cared for my son and myself, dealing with the emotional stress of a very sick husband, and trying to support all my children (3) and family without being able to get together with them.

On February 16, Mark was put on a ventilator and they kept him sedated in a comatose state. His condition worsened. He ran very high fevers. This gave us a "chance" of survival. Due to his young age, 64, and his lack of any prior health conditions, they did not understand why he was getting so sick, but due to those reasons, they gave us a chance of him pulling through. My family clung to that "chance". In the meantime, my son and I were finally out of our quarantine by February 23.

On day 15 of being on a vent, they did a tracheotomy and PEG tube. The next day, March 3, he tolerated a three-hour breathing trial but again spiked high temperatures. By March 6, the fever was gone, he was tolerating up to 8 hours of reduced ventilator support and began to receive physical, occupational, and speech therapy along with his respiratory therapy. After 22 days of being on a vent, he was taken off on March 10. He began using the trach mask for his oxygen needs.

We were able to send one visitor a day beginning March 5. My children, daughter-in-law and my son's fiancé set up a rotation (6 of us) and we saw him for the first time since I took him to the hospital on February 7. On March 7, they put the talking valve on his trach and he was able to talk to us! As of March 11, he was cleared to eat and drink, receiving tube feedings to supplement his caloric intake. He had the trach mask at night due to prior sleep apnea with C-pap machine at night at home. By March 14, he was able to sit up in bed and stand with a walker. The trach was removed March 16.

Today March 22, hospital day 44, we are getting ready for discharge home this week. He has lost most of his muscle, has very little endurance and has a long road back, but he is alive and improving every day!

I want to thank you (Ascension Mercy) for a number of things:

- Keeping Mark alive
- Keeping his body functioning so he can recover with apparently no damage to organs or brain except for his COVID damaged lungs
- The Ascension Mercy ICU nursing staff that spent hours and hours monitoring him and moving him from supine to prone, and all the other things they did. We can only imagine the difficult physical and mental work you put in for this man you did not know. We cannot thank you enough. (I wish I could name each one individually).
- The ICU unit clerk who answered my calls and got me to his nurse.
- The ICU nurses who talked with me, gave me updates, never rushed me, answered my questions. You deserve more than just a thank you from us.
- Drs. Zornosa, Roberts and Zeimet who kept him alive and brought him back to us. I appreciated their honest straight talk.
- Dr. Foley's great work with the trach and PEG tube placements and direction on the rehab unit.
- Heather Clower, wound nurse. She impressed me so much. I was there for two of her inspections and resulting care. I have a medical background, so I know how important and difficult good skin care is. She did an awesome detailed job. She was extremely nice and friendly and explained everything she was doing as well.
- The medical floor staff who got him moving and eating and taking care of him as he started to realize just what he had gone through.
- The Speech Language Pathologist who got him eating very quickly and safely. Their early intervention was much appreciated.
- The OTs and PTs who worked with him while in the ICU and continued to throughout his entire stay. Very nice, patient and pushy, as they should be. Thank you!
- Vicki, his case manager who was always willing to talk with me, kept me informed on the plan and was just super super nice.
- The rehab unit nurses who really moved him along his path to recovery.
- The housekeeping staff who are unnoticed but not unappreciated by us. They do their job so the rest can do theirs.
- The lack of any hospital acquired infections-I better not jinx this now, but 44 days of intense care due to a highly infectious syndrome during a pandemic, and no hospital acquired infections is commendable.
- For getting Mark home to his family. As his twin 2 ½ year old grandchildren have been saying for over a month now-"Papa is sick". And his children, 29, 24, and 21 are besides themselves that they are getting their dad back.

These are trying and difficult times for my family. We are forever grateful to Ascension Mercy for the medical care provided with humanity. These people are more than heros to us. We will continue to utilize the Ascension system as Mark works his way back home and as close to a return to normalcy as possible.

Thank you from me and my entire family.

My deepest appreciation,

Renee Schubart