



November 7, 2022

Dear Friend,

I remember wondering how I got there – how I went from a perfect day of cross-country skiing on fresh powder just two weeks earlier, to now lying in a hospital bed and being told I had suffered a massive heart attack.

It was a weekend dinner with neighbours in my condo, a tradition we had started during the pandemic. I was stoking the fire, and thinking how nice it is to have a real fireplace. I stood up and something felt off; I was lightheaded, very hot, and I had a strange sensation in my neck. I fell back on my chair and when I came to, my companions told me I had fainted, and Emergency Services were on their way.

I was whisked away to Northumberland Hills Hospital (NHH), where things went quickly – I was hooked up to monitors, had blood drawn, tests and a CT scan performed. I shared my medical history and details about my health and lifestyle with my care team, including telling them about that perfect snowy day just two weeks earlier when I spent my 75th birthday cross-country skiing. I was lucid and I was not in any pain. In fact, at no time had I felt pain.

The medical team was quick to rule out a stroke and their main concern was that my heart rate was slowing. Over the next few hours, it continued to get slower and slower, so they moved me to a trauma room and prepared to restart my heart if necessary.

The doctor informed me I had heart stress and potentially had experienced a mild heart attack. I remember questioning this – surely, I'd be going home that evening? The answer was no. Instead, the team would continue to monitor my condition; I would have more tests and bloodwork; I was given medication to chew and swallow, and an injection. Still, the numbers on my monitor were not stabilizing. I was admitted to the Intensive Care Unit (ICU), where I was tucked into a comfortable and warm bed to be monitored overnight.

In the morning, the doctor in the ICU told me I had suffered a massive heart attack. I objected – surely it was only mild? He explained how my test results and numbers overnight indicated this was not the case. I had experienced a massive heart attack and later was transferred to a regional hospital, where two stents were inserted into my heart, and I was asked to return for a third.

To say I was shocked by my experience is an understatement. Looking past the shock – past the surprise of how quickly a health crisis can happen – I was also incredibly grateful. I was lucky to have been with friends when I had my attack; friends who got me immediate help. Every stage of care I experienced was exceptional – from the competent paramedics to the well-trained emergency staff at NHH to the caring experts in the ICU. The people on these teams played an active role in saving my life and restoring me to good health.

My name is Donna Wootton and I share my story in praise of the high standard of healthcare we have access to here in Northumberland County. Mine is just one story among many whose lives have been saved and touched by having a skilled team and a well-equipped hospital in our community.



Donna Wootton

(over...)

As the Chief of the Emergency Department, I find stories like Donna's all too familiar. Patients present in unique ways and their symptoms are not always "classic" for the diagnosis. First steps in the Emergency Department are often reactive, aimed at stabilizing our patients and making sure they are safe. However, another integral part of our care is establishing a diagnosis. It includes listening for those subtle points on one's story and symptom history that may give us a clue. It includes utilizing any necessary tests and available equipment to help us diagnose, monitor, and ultimately, establish if there was a concerning diagnosis that led to one's presentation to the Emergency Department, no matter how subtle.

Cardiac monitors are a big part of such integral equipment. Present in our patients' rooms, these machines are our electronic partners at the bedside and are instrumental in caring for some of our most vulnerable patients. They allow us to monitor a patient's heartbeat and rhythm, blood pressure, oxygen levels in the blood, and more. We rely on that information to help establish a diagnosis. We also rely on that information to monitor a patient's status, their vital signs, and their heart, always in real time and always working. Donna refers to that in her letter when she mentions her heart rate being monitored and eventually her care and room changing; her team ready to support her heart if it suddenly fails.

These machines are so useful they are ubiquitous across our hospital and follow a patient's journey from ER to their inpatient and ICU care. Community support from people like you helps fund this critical equipment.

This is why I am proud to be serving as the Chair of this year's **Light Up a Life** campaign. With your help, we will strive to complete an upgrade to the cardiac monitoring system across our hospital, which will include additional cardiac monitors and a new central monitoring system in NHH's ICU – equipment so fundamental to the care Donna required.



Dr. Paul Ketov

Building on the success of last year's campaign, our goal is to raise the remaining \$258,000 to complete this half a million-dollar upgrade. I am confident your gift of any amount – combined with gifts from other friends in the community – will help us realize this goal.

Will you join me by making a donation to ensure the most advanced cardiac monitors are available for our patients?

While emergency medicine is often reactive, keeping our hospital up to date and replacing aging equipment with modern technology should not be. It is no secret our community is growing and together we must prepare for this. We must be proactive to ensure that when patients come through our doors seeking care – patients like Donna – we have the equipment we need to test, diagnose, and treat them.

Thank you in advance for your support – your generosity will touch, and possibly save, lives.

Yours truly

Dr. Paul Ketov,
**NHH Chief of Emergency Department and Acute Services
Chair, Light up a Life Campaign 2022**

