



# EMERGENCY STROKE CARE

## Dentist Becomes the Patient

*A periodontist on staff at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital, Robert Ashmen, DMD, never dreamed that one day he would forget how to operate his own shower.*

*Shown: Periodontist Robert Ashmen, DMD, suffered a life-threatening stroke and is now back to treating his patients, thanks to the Brain Attack Protocol at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital, which rapidly assesses and treats patients suffering from a stroke.*

"I knew there was a hot knob and a cold knob, but I just couldn't figure out how to turn it on," he said. "That's how it started. I woke up one day and simple things like that just didn't make sense."

Within one hour Dr. Ashmen couldn't speak or move.

His wife, Robyn recognized his symptoms as a stroke and quickly called 911. Dr. Ashmen was rushed to Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital (RWJ) where doctors discovered he was suffering from a left-middle cerebral artery stroke that commonly occurs when an artery to the brain is blocked.

"It's one of the worst strokes you can have. One in four patients die from it and at least another 50 percent end up with permanent neurological disabilities that prevent them from independent living," explained James McKinney, MD, Assistant Professor of Neurology at Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School and Medical Director of the Comprehensive Stroke Center at RWJ.

Fortunately for Dr. Ashmen, RWJ is recognized for their Brain Attack Protocol that allows them to rapidly assess patients exhibiting signs of a stroke.

"Our Emergency Department (ED) team recognizes, stabilizes and gets patients the most appropriate treatment they need," said Chirag N. Shah, MD, Assistant Professor of Emergency Medicine at Robert Wood Johnson Medical School and an attending physician in the ED at RWJ.

"Unlike other facilities that may have to transfer a patient or use generalized blood thinners only, we have the unique ability to treat a brain clot onsite, through the veins, with generalized blood thinners—a service that could be critical to the patient's survival."



*Dr. Ashmen's treatment team was a combination of several specialties, including (from left) Chirag N. Shah, MD, Assistant Professor of Emergency Medicine at Robert Wood Johnson Medical School and an attending physician in the Emergency Department at RWJ; James McKinney, MD, Assistant Professor of Neurology at Robert Wood Johnson Medical School and Medical Director, of the Comprehensive Stroke Center at RWJ; and Ugo Paolucci, MD, Assistant Professor of Neurology at Robert Wood Johnson Medical School and an attending neurointerventionalist at RWJ.*

According to Ugo Paolucci, MD, Assistant Professor of Neurology at Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School and an attending neurointerventionalist at RWJ, the Brain Attack Protocol is a very organized process. "Very little time is wasted in evaluating the patient and getting the proper mechanism in place for whatever treatment is needed," he said.

A CAT scan revealed that the best option for Dr. Ashmen was a catheter-based

treatment to open the blood vessel in his brain. "This helped us mitigate the damage," Dr. Paolucci said. "It also gave him a much greater chance at a complete recovery."

According to Dr. McKinney, Dr. Ashmen's survival was a combination of his wife's

"The ED staff at the hospital was extremely helpful," Dr. Ashmen's wife Robyn added. "They kept me informed of everything that was going on throughout the whole process. I was very pleased."

Stroke is the third leading cause of death in America and the leading cause of disability. Outcome and survival is all determined by how fast a patient is treated. RWJ is one of a few hospitals in the State of New Jersey that is designated as a Comprehensive Stroke Center.

To earn and maintain certification, the hospital must adhere to the most stringent national standards and guidelines for stroke care. This includes having a rapid-response stroke treatment team accessible 24 hours a day that consists of neurologists, neurosurgeons, radiologists, emergency medicine physicians, pharmacists, specially trained nurses, rehabilitation experts, EMTs and other experts.

According to Dr. McKinney, when it comes to stroke, time is crucial. "People should know the signs and call 911 immediately," he said. "The quicker you get them to a Comprehensive Stroke Center like RWJ, the more likely you are to save somebody's life, improve their outcome for survival and limit their chance of disability and Dr. Ashmen is a living testament to that."

Visit [www.rwjh.edu/stroke](http://www.rwjh.edu/stroke) or call 1-888-MD-RWJUH.

"I have nothing but praise for what they did for me," Dr. Ashmen said about the staff at RWJ. "They were good-natured and good care takers and I attribute my full recovery to each and every one of them."