

CARDIAC CARE

Triathlon Training Within Months of Heart Procedure

While training for his first triathlon, 52-year-old William Lindemann started feeling like his heart was racing and he could not catch his breath.

A life-long athlete, Mr. Lindemann regularly competed in marathons and had been training several years for the triathlon, which requires swimming 2.4 miles, biking 112 miles, and running 26.2 miles. Although he continued to train, he couldn't do as much as he needed to do to compete. "It was getting worse and worse. Before it was every few days. Then it was every day," said the Bridgewater resident, who owns Rick's Auto Body in North Arlington, NJ.

His primary care doctor ordered some tests and sent him to specialists, but they were unable to determine a cause.

Mr. Lindemann mentioned his problem to one of his customers, Daniel N. Mondrow, MD, attending cardiologist at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital (RWJ). Dr. Mondrow reviewed the test results and diagnosed Mr. Lindemann with an irregular heartbeat (arrhythmia) called atrial fibrillation. Atrial fibrillation causes the heart's two upper chambers (the atria) to beat irregularly and out of coordination with the two lower chambers (the ventricles). This increases the risk of stroke.

Some patients can take medications to relieve atrial fibrillation symptoms, but these medicines lower the heart rate and have unpleasant side effects. As an elite athlete, Mr. Lindemann's resting heart rate was already very low. "Medications were not an option," said Dr. Mondrow. "We needed to eradicate the atrial fibrillation through radiofrequency ablation."

Ablation can cure atrial fibrillation by using radiofrequency energy to destroy a tiny area of heart muscle and stop the electrical impulses that are causing the arrhythmia. The procedure is done through a catheter (a long flexible tube) inserted into a vein in the groin and moved into

the heart. Dr. Mondrow referred Mr. Lindemann to Ziad Younan, MD, an electrophysiologist, a cardiologist who specializes in abnormal heart rhythms, at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital. "For a young guy who's athletic, ablation was the best treatment," says Dr. Younan, who does more Stereotaxis® ablations for atrial fibrillation than anyone else in the tri-state area and is second in volume nationwide.

In March 2014, Dr. Younan performed the ablation, curing Mr. Lindemann's atrial fibrillation. He was able to safely and precisely stop the atrial fibrillation. Stereotaxis uses magnets to help steer the flexible catheter to the right spot in the heart. RWJ has the highest volume of Stereotaxis procedures in the nation.

"I had surgery on Friday and walked out of the hospital on Saturday. Three weeks later, I ran a half marathon," said Mr. Lindemann. Three months after the ablation, Mr. Lindemann competed in his first triathlon. Now, he is training for the Lake Placid Ironman this summer.

Visit www.rwjuh.edu/stereotaxis or call 1-888-MD-RWJUH.



Shown: Cardiac patient Bill Lindemann of Bridgewater trains for the swimming leg of his upcoming triathlon in the pool at the Somerset Valley YMCA in Bridgewater.