



24 year old cardiac arrest victim saved at Central Station.

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If anyone needs an illustration of how unexpectedly heart trouble can hit even young people, they could consider the case of this 24-year old IT specialist.

The event occurred after having finished work and on the way to a friend's place at Penrith, at the foot of the scenic Blue Mountains in NSW. On arrival at Platform 8 at Central Station the train was waiting, as the intercity services do. There was no rush and a comfortable seats found upstairs for the 50-or-so minute trip.

"The next thing I remember is waking up in the ICU at Royal Price Alfred Hospital that night."

This young IT worker had suffered a ventricular fibrillation (cardiac arrest), despite having no background of heart problems. The drama has left this patient hugely grateful but also quite shaken.

"You hear about medical emergencies at Central all the time," they sighed as the story was recounted to Cardiac Responder, "and I'm told only ten per cent of all people who suffer ventricular fibrillation get to hospital alive. But the people and the device saved my life ... the staff, even the passengers, were amazing."

Having moved back into the family home, the thoughts expressed are "It is hard to come to terms with being technically dead for four minutes, but I guess I can deal with that in time."

"I also consider myself fortunate the attack happened before the train left the station." Quick work by Sydney Trains' Occupational First Aider, Jeff Marsh, was key to the patient's survival.

"If I get a report someone is unconscious I will ask for the defibrillator straight away and take it with me," Jeff told Cardiac Responder "[This one] escalated and when I got there they were in cardiac arrest."

When Jeff went to the upper deck of the train he discovered people already performing CPR.

"They wondered if they should stop and I said, 'no it's fine, keep going'. While they were doing that, I cut the shirt off and put the pads on, and let the defibrillator do what it wanted. I went to the head of the patient with the oxygen and directed the CPR operation."

The situation was severe. After the first shock Jeff felt for a pulse but there was none, and listened for a heartbeat and found the same discouraging result. “We continued CPR for one more cycle and while the machine was analysing I had a quick listen for a heartbeat, and it was there.”

The patient had been brought back with just one shock. The whole process had started at 5.15 pm, and they were taken away by ambulance 35 minutes later, unconscious the whole time but moving around quite a bit.

Having now just turned 25, the patient says they are slowly recovering. “My heart has generally settled down. It’s not perfect ... I’m not able to exert myself much. I also now have an implanted defibrillator. If it detects my heart doing anything weird it will give me a shock.”

CARDIAC Responder defibrillators have been at Central Station and across the Sydney Trains network for five years now. They have saved an estimated 34 lives in that time. Jeff says they are easy to use and “absolute life-savers, literally”.

This young patient knows that the speed of the response enabled them to not only to survive but to avoid further damage. “Ventricular fibrillation stops oxygen to the brain. Depending on how long it takes to revive you, it’s extremely rare apparently to still have major brain function. I have no problems there that I know of.

“It’s not only me that wants to thank everyone who helped, it is also my parents.” As this was said, her mother nodded vigorously.

NB: A Heartsafe Zone starts with a defibrillator system – not just a defibrillator. In other words, the defibrillator is monitored 24 hours a day for presence and functionality. Ongoing services ensure that, when cardiac arrest strikes, people are “aware of” and “confident to use” the defib and have the peace of mind that can only be provided with around-the-clock emergency back-up.