

“Lisa is dead!” The hysterical scream from my wife, jolted me out of my seat.

“Was it a car accident? What happened? Is Patricia all right?”

It was 10 o’clock in the morning and we had been watching the news checking on the weather. When the phone rang, the annunciator on the TV indicated it was Patricia our daughter. My wife had picked up the phone and her cry had frozen my blood.

“Jim pick up the phone, “Eileen cried from the other room.

I could hear Patricia, hysterical on the phone, describing to my wife what happened

“I received a call from some doctor, at Hartford Hospital, who told me that Lisa was just entering a conference with her boss the head of pharmacy and several of the major doctors. Thirty seconds after she entered the room, she fell on the floor not breathing and with no heartbeat. He told me they were doing CPR. I asked if she had recovered and he answered “not yet” and then he hung up. I called Jeff (her husband) and he is on his way home right now. I am going to call Eileen because she is only five minutes away from the hospital and she can get there faster than any of us. I am talking to you on another phone so that that doctor can call me back. I have no way of reaching him to find out what is going on. ”

“If we leave right now we can be there in three hours,” Eileen said.

“No mom, don’t do anything until we learn what’s going on. If everybody’s in motion, we will be very unorganized. Wait until we get more information and then we can figure out what we have to do. I have to call Eileen right now she’s in between classes at medical school. She can get there and get around in the hospital with her credentials and maybe get us some information.”

Twenty minutes later Patricia called back, her voice a little calmer.

“Mom they brought her around within a couple of minutes and she is now in intensive care. They are planning to put her into an induced low temperature coma until they can figure out what caused the event. This will prevent further damage. Eileen has gotten to the hospital but I don’t know if she’s managed to talk to anybody yet. Jeff just got home and we’re both on our way down there. We will call and give you any information as soon as we can. In the meantime, please contact all the rest of the family and let them know what’s going on. We will be in contact and will see you soon.”

Patricia and her family live in Mystic Connecticut about two and half hours from us in Nashua New Hampshire. Lisa the second daughter was 24 years old and had just

completed her PhD in pharmacy at UConn. She was now working as a pharmacist at Hartford Hospital about an hour from her home. Her younger sister Eileen had graduated from UConn and was now in medical school about five miles away from Hartford Hospital at UConn hospital. Our immediate family is scattered all over New England and we had to notify them all, but we first needed more information as to what happened and what the prognosis was. The phones were in continuous use for the next several hours. Gradually the story came out until we got a reasonable picture of what happened and how the events went down.

Lisa had been ill with a stomach bug for a week. She was no longer contagious but she was getting bored out of her mind. She had an apartment in a 26-story building just down the road but her roommate was at work and there was no one to talk with. Lisa went into work but her boss advised her to go back home. Lisa pushed back and indicated she was much better off working so she was told to come along with her boss, head of pharmacy, to the weekly medical meeting on the 12th floor of the hospital with all the heads of the medical departments. As Lisa, her boss and two other doctors walked into the conference room, they met another half dozen doctors already there. Then Lisa hit the floor! She was not breathing and she had no pulse. Doctors immediately started CPR, hit the 'blue light' alarm notifying the hospital that an emergency was underway, but found there was no defibrillator on the 12th floor. The heart department was on the 11th floor. One doctor made a frantic run down to grab a defibrillator and brought it back. With that machine, they were able to bring Lisa back. They immediately transported her to ICU and put her into a medically induced coma. She remained there for several hours. They heavily sedated Lisa and wired her up to multiple monitors. She had a full-time nurse in the room with her. Then she suffered a second event and died again. This time every alarm on the floor went off; Doctors and nurses overwhelmed her. Lisa came back a second time and they prepped her for the insertion of a heart defibrillator. The biopsy indicated that the cause was a virus that attacked the lower ventricle of her heart. This mandated the insertion of the heart defibrillator and they accomplished it with no problems.

For several weeks, Lisa was under observation as they slowly brought her out of the induced coma and ran tests to see what residual damage, if any, occurred. I was there when the doctor said that of all the patients Hartford Hospital put through this procedure, she was the only one who came out of it with no detrimental effects at all. I asked the doctor to what he attributed this.

“This attack by a virus to the heart often happens to young athletes like Lisa without warning. They are often on a basketball court, a football field, or a racetrack and, with no warning, they fall down dead. We usually find out that they have been attacked by a virus at the autopsy. Lisa was lucky it happened at the right place at the right time. If she were on the road in a car, in her apartment alone or even in an elevator when the heart attack occurred, she would not be with us now. The doctors got to her immediately and

administered CPR. The defibrillator was located quickly enough so that no damage was done and we got her into the low temperature coma before any damage was done to the brain. The second event occurred when she was in the coma and medical personnel were right there. Now that she has the permanent defibrillator, it should negate any problems with additional attacks.”

Two modifications resulted from Lisa’s heart attacks. Hartford Hospital now has defibrillators on every floor of the hospital. When I asked Lisa what changed in her life she replied,

“Pop Pop I don’t let the little things bother me anymore. Most of the things I used to be concerned about are not worth the effort. Life is too short to let the little things bother you.

THE END