

Cardiovascular Technology Student Passes a Big Test

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Michael Savage is a first-year student in the Cardiovascular Technology Program at Grossmont College in El Cajon, California. On October 17, 2003, one day after his 54th birthday, he was at home alone studying for an exam. The exam was to cover the anatomy and physiology of the coronary arteries and the signs and symptoms of myocardial infarction.

At approximately 5:00 pm, Michael experienced a sudden onset of pain that was localized to his left shoulder. The pain was very sharp in nature and slowly increased in severity. Mike was thinking, "I can't be having a heart attack while I'm studying about heart attacks!" He decided that he should lie down, but when he tried to walk to his bedroom he began to feel lightheaded. At that point, he called 911!



By the time the paramedics arrived, the pain had subsided and Mike wondered if he should actually go to the hospital. While he was being examined the pain flooded back, more intense than before, and at that point he got on the gurney.

He was taken to Scripps Memorial Hospital in La Jolla, California. On the way he was given sublingual nitroglycerin and morphine for the pain. He was quickly evaluated in the Emergency Room, and they confirmed ECG changes consistent with acute myocardial ischemia. He was rushed to Cardiac Catheterization Laboratory, and as he entered the lab, he recognized the name on one of the tech's badges as Michael Low. He remembered seeing the name on a plaque in the Grossmont CVT Lab that honors distinguished students in the program. Michael Low had graduated from the program in June 2003 with the highest GPA in the Invasive Track.

A coronary angiogram was performed, followed by balloon angioplasty and placement of 3 drug-eluting stents in the left anterior descending coronary artery. Following the procedure Mike was pain-free, although he did spike a mild temperature the next morning that resolved in twenty-four hours.

Prior to his discharge on October 21st, an echocardiogram was performed by another graduate of the Grossmont CVT Program. The study demonstrated normal left ventricular function. Mike's experience in the hospital, and especially being cared for by two graduates of the very program in which he was enrolled, confirmed that he had made a great choice in selecting his new career in the CVT profession.

Michael returned to class on Tuesday, October 22nd, in time to attend the review for the exam for which he had been studying when his chest pain began. His classmates were amazed at his rapid recovery and return to school. He took the exam two days later and of course made an A+. "Cardiovascular technology is an amazing science," says Michael, "but I wouldn't recommend learning about heart attacks by having one."

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