Hiker Without Heart Receives Transplant 607 Miles Later

SynCardia Systems, Inc., manufacturer of the world's first and only FDA, Health Canada and CE (Europe) approved Total Artificial Heart, announced today that avid hiker Chris Marshall, who received the SynCardia temporary Total Artificial Heart in February, has been successfully bridged to a heart transplant at University of Washington (UW) Medical Center in Seattle.

"I walked 607 miles with the Total Artificial Heart, so I was really fit going into that surgery," said Mr. Marshall, who received his heart transplant on Sept. 12. "That's very different from a lot of people who go into the transplant really sick. After the surgery, they not only have to recover from the transplant, but also from being sick for so long leading up to it."

Mr. Marshall was implanted with the SynCardia Total Artificial Heart on Feb. 6. Seven weeks later, on March 21, he became the first Total Artificial Heart patient in the Pacific Northwest to be discharged from the hospital using the Freedom® portable driver to power his Total Artificial Heart. After his discharge, Mr. Marshall hiked daily in the Seattle area with his wife Kathy and their golden retriever Gracie.

When asked what advice he has for other Total Artificial Heart patients, Mr. Marshall said, "Don't go home and stay cooped up. You need to get out and take advantage of the time you have to get in shape to prepare for the transplant surgery and live life. Some people are afraid. The only thing they want to do is be home or go to the clinic for visits, but for me, that's not living life."

In 1999, Mr. Marshall was diagnosed with cardiomyopathy, a disease that destroys the heart muscle over time, and ventricular tachycardia, an irregular, fast heartbeat. Although his implanted defibrillator shocked his heart 30 times over a 12-year span, Mr. Marshall never let his heart condition slow him down. He continued to hike three to five miles daily, despite his ejection fraction being only 20%.

However, last fall, he started experiencing shortness of breath while hiking on level ground, which had never happened before. On Jan. 23, Mr. Marshall and his wife Kathy traveled from their home in Wasilla, Alaska, to Seattle for what was supposed to be a one-day heart evaluation. Doctors discovered his heart was functioning at less than 10 percent, and didn't think he would survive the flight home.

Mr. Marshall was not a candidate for a left ventricular assist device (LVAD) - a mechanical pump that supports only the left side of the heart - because the right side of his heart was too weak. His doctors decided the SynCardia Total Artificial Heart was his only option for survival.

Weighing 13.5 pounds (~6 kg), the Freedom portable driver is the world's first wearable power supply for the SynCardia Total Artificial Heart. The Freedom portable driver is CE approved for use in Europe and undergoing an FDA-approved Investigational Device Exemption (IDE) clinical study in the U.S.

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