

People love lists: the best places to shop, the best restaurants, the best athletes, etc.

Here's a new list: the best place for a cardiac arrest! If you are going to have one (which I don't recommend) Puerto Vallarta is a very good place to be.

It is Wednesday afternoon. As I write this, I am sitting under a palapa on the beach in Puerto Vallarta. One week ago today, under this very same palapa, I was dead. My heart stopped; I was not breathing. Nada. While I was unconscious, Providence was with me. A nurse from the U.S. was nearby and answered my wife's call for help. She began administering CPR and managing the scene. Two other vacationing nurses also answered calls for help from a nearby swimming pool. They joined in and became new members to what was to become my growing world-class medical team.

Dr- Fernando Dominguez and the Global Life Flight ambulance arrived from Paradise Village Mall. A defibrillator shocked my heart back to life, and still unconscious and unaware, I was on my way to Amerimed Hospital for evaluation and treatment.

I was very fortunate that health professionals were at the beach; else this story would already ended.

We were met at Amerimed by cardiologist Dr. Jorge Chávez. He immediately decided that I needed to get to a cath lab A S A P. Into another ambulance for a short ride to Cornerstone Hospital. Dr. Chávez performed a coronary angiogram and concluded that a defibrillation system needed to be implanted, and that Dr. Susano Lara, an electrophysiologist cardiologist was the best man for the job. Plans were set in motion and I was admitted to Cornerstone's ICU.

Overnight Wednesday/Thursday my heart stopped, and was restarted three times. Dr. Chávez returned to the hospital to oversee my treatment and care. I was stabilized and made it through to Friday afternoon when surgery was scheduled.

Dr. Lara and his team arrived midday Friday. The surgery lasted six hours as the device was implanted and connected to my heart.

Recovery in the ICU was comfortable. The nursing staff was superb. Dr. Lara returned Saturday to read and adjust the device. Saturday night I was moved from ICU to the patient floor and was released by Doctors Chávez and Paulo Castro late Sunday afternoon.

OBSERVATIONS

I was very fortunate that medical professionals were onsite when my episode occurred. Otherwise I would have died.

The level of professional care I received in Puerto Vallarta, in my view is world class evidenced by:

- Being med at Amerimed by Dr. Chávez, a top cardiologist, who quickly and correctly diagnosed my condition and moved me to a full-service hospital for proper diagnosis and treatment.
- Cornerstone hospital, while very small by U.S. standards, provided excellent care as I have ever received. Competence, professionalism, attention to detail, cleanliness and personal caring attention was evident throughout.
- Note that air evacuation was considered and dismissed by my family. I think that's one of our best decisions ever. I cannot imagine receiving better care anywhere in the world.
- Dr. Chávez is in my opinion, the most competent doctor I have ever met. He is not only a gifted physician, I believe him to be otherwise a remarkable and caring human being.
- All of the doctors were available and patiently and kindly answered questions and concerns of my wife and our support network of vacationing family and friends. Doctors Chávez and Castro most notably led us through this ordeal.

I have no (i.e., none) complaints about anyone or anything I encountered during this stressful episode. Unfortunately I do not have everyone's name that helped us get through this. Those I would like to single out are Nurse Rubén Flores and Doctors Castro, Chávez and Lara.

Paul Ott.
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March 12th 2008.

P.S. Whoever prepared the fish Sunday (9 Mar) lunch deserves a raise. It was great!