

Heart scan saves lives

A simple way to detect heart disease

“Get a heart scan.” Those are the words Bill Chew, 62, tells practically everyone he meets these days. Little wonder. The simple, non-invasive test literally saved his life.

As he tells it, “My wife and I were watching Oprah,” he said, still blown away by the coincidence, “and Dr. Oz (Oprah’s health expert) was on talking about heart scans. A couple days later, she saw that St. Luke’s was offering a heart scan for \$99, which is well under the average \$300-500 cost. Neither of us had any symptoms of chest pain or numbness. But my wife said, ‘Why don’t we do it just for peace of mind.’”

Chew agreed. But while his wife’s 10-minute test to detect calcified plaque in the arteries came back normal, his did not.

A doctor from St. Luke’s called Chew that afternoon and not only said that his results were the highest they’ve ever seen, but encouraged him to immediately call a cardiologist for the next available appointment.

“They did an EKG (electrocardiogram), checked my blood flow and blood pressure, and said it was all great,” said Chew.

So the next step was a stress test.

“I flew through the treadmill,” he said. “But when they took pictures of my heart, they said they saw something and suggested a cardiac catheterization.”

While the procedure was underway at St. Luke’s, doctors found he had two

arteries that were 100 percent blocked and two that were 85 percent blocked. They also discovered that Chew already had suffered a heart attack, even though he says he had no symptoms.

No one was more surprised than Chew.

“That was a Friday, and surgery was scheduled the following Wednesday,” said Chew. “The doctor told me to go home and don’t move...sit in a chair for the weekend and don’t do anything because I was a heart attack waiting to happen. But I had no idea. I’ve never even taken medication in my life.”

Chew ended up having quadruple bypass surgery.

“The only symptom I noticed is that when I walked uphill while golfing,

Other signs are numbness in the arm; pain between the shoulder blades; chest, arm, jaw, tooth, abdomen or neck discomfort; nausea and vomiting; anxiety, nervousness and/or cold, sweaty skin; paleness or pallor; increased or irregular heart rate; or a feeling of impending doom; as well as, disorientation or delirium in older patients.

However, Dr. Wagdy adds that patients also need to be aware of contributing factors to heart attacks, such as smoking, poor diet and lack of exercise, diabetes, obesity, high blood pressure and family history. Moreover, they should always consult with their doctor first before scheduling a medical test.

“The scan isn’t a definitive way to screen for coronary artery disease,” said Dr. Wagdy. “But if it’s abnormal, then it

“If the scan is abnormal, then it indicates to doctors that there is a potential problem.”

Hisham Wagdy, MD, Cardiologists, P.C.

I’d get a slight pain in my throat, but then it would go away,” said Chew. “The scary thing to me is that heart attacks are the number one killer of men and women, yet people don’t know how many different symptoms there are.”

Heart attack warning signs

According to his cardiologist, Hisham Wagdy, MD, of Cardiologists, P.C. throat discomfort is just one of the potential warning signs for a heart attack.

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In fact, each year more than 310,000 Americans die without even experiencing a symptom or indication of heart disease, according to the American Heart Association.

It’s called sudden cardiac death, the same tragic fate that awaited Tim Russert and shocked the nation when the news

commentator died suddenly of a heart attack last June.

How it works

Heart scans use computed tomography (CT) machines for a non-invasive view of the arteries, searching for calcium buildup that indicates the metabolic and inflammatory disease called atherosclerosis. The higher the score, the higher the risk of heart attack or stroke.

For Chew, the good news is that it alerted him to a problem, and opened the door for doctors to explore further.

He returned home seven days after surgery, and completed ten weeks of cardiac rehab at St. Luke’s, working out three times a week on a stationary bicycle and treadmill, as well as attending heart healthy classes.

“I can’t say enough about how wonderful the cardiac rehab people are, as well as my cardiologist and the entire St. Luke’s healthcare team,” said Chew.

Today, he gets his cholesterol checked and sees the cardiologist once a year, and even serves on St. Luke’s Heart Care Services advisory committee, spreading the word about health issues.

Bill Chew, and his wife Gayle, working on their building after it was damaged by the June flood.

“I feel great,” said Chew. “I have to, I’ve been working 12 to 14 hour days repairing our commercial building, which was damaged in the flood. I’m very active, and I tell everyone I meet to get a heart scan. I feel the need to educate people and tell them there are more signs of a heart attack than chest pain. That’s why I’m a strong advocate for the heart scan – it saved my life.”

The heart scan is for men and women between the ages of 40 and 70. All that is needed is a doctor’s referral.

■ Call St. Luke’s Heart Care Services at 319/369-8909 for a \$99 heart scan or take HEARTaware a free seven-minute online heart health assessment, which helps determine risk factors for heart disease. Log on to stlukesheartaware.com to take the assessment.

