

# A heart made for dancing

## Simple procedure prepares woman for wedding

Vanessa Barkdoll had one wish for her upcoming wedding day.

"I want to dance at my wedding," said Barkdoll. "I'm not going to sit back and watch other people dance."

Barkdoll suffered from an abnormal heart rhythm, which caused her heart to beat extremely fast. Dancing could be difficult for her.

"All of a sudden my heart would jump and race to 150 to 250 beats a minute in an instant," said Barkdoll. "When it was going that fast it was painful because it was so much work and I would become short of breath and feel light-headed."

"Vanessa actually had two different rhythm problems," said Mohit Chawla, MD, a cardiologist with Cardiologists, L.C. "She was born with this condition and it affected her lifestyle. Her fast heart rate would last anywhere from 15 minutes to an hour and she often had to visit the Emergency Room and receive IV medications to get her heart rate under control."

Barkdoll's heart rhythm problem grew progressively worse over the last couple of years, and with her upcoming nuptials she sought help for her condition.

Her family doctor referred Barkdoll to Cardiologists, L.C. where she was put in touch with Dr. Chawla.

Vanessa Barkdoll with Oscar, enjoys life after her cardiac ablation procedure.

"Rhythm problems are very common and can go undiagnosed for many people for a long time," said Dr. Chawla. "Often-times, individuals with heart rhythm problems are misdiagnosed as having panic disorders."

### Cardiac ablation

Chawla recommended Barkdoll undergo cardiac ablation to correct her abnormal heart rhythm. When the heart beats, electricity flows throughout the heart in a regular pattern. An interruption in this pattern may cause an abnormal heart beat. Medicine sometimes helps correct this short circuit in the heart.

In some cases, however, the most effective treatment is to destroy the tissue causing the short circuit. This procedure is called cardiac ablation, which is a non-surgical, minimally invasive procedure. Ablation is most often used to treat rapid heartbeats that begin in the upper chambers of the heart -- known as supraventricular tachycardias (SVT).

"To perform an ablation, we insert a catheter, which is a narrow, flexible wire, into a blood vessel, often through a site in the groin or neck and wind the wire to the heart," said Dr. Chawla. "Once in place, the electrodes at the tip of the catheter gather data and create a map of the heart. This map leads me to the abnormal site in the heart and energy destroys the area where the electrical disturbance is occurring and restores a healthy heart rhythm."

Patients undergoing this procedure are typically sedated and awake. However, in some cases the doctor may decide to use anesthesia. The procedure usually takes three to six hours. After the procedure cardiac ablation patients are moved to a recovery area where they lie still for about three hours to prevent bleeding at the

catheter site. Patients can go home the same day and usually resume normal activities within a few days.

Ablation can also be used to treat heart rhythm problems that begin in the heart's lower chambers. These electrical problems can be the most dangerous because it can cause a heart attack. For individuals with this type of heart rhythm problem ablation can be used along with an implantable cardioverter device (ICD).

"I strongly recommend individuals who experience a racing heartbeat, heart palpitations, light-headedness, dizziness and especially people who are actually passing out to talk with their family doctor," said Dr. Chawla.

**"Rhythm problems are very common and can go undiagnosed for many people for a long time. Often, individuals with heart rhythm problems are misdiagnosed as having panic disorders."**

Mohit Chawla, MD, cardiologist, Cardiologists, L.C.

"It can be a very serious condition and these individuals should be referred on to see a cardiologist."

### Condition cured

Today after cardiac ablation Barkdoll is considered cured. Her racing heartbeat is a thing of the past.

"I don't even think about it anymore," said Barkdoll. "I am back to normal, which is nice. I had a great experience at St. Luke's, the nurses and doctors were great and took very good care of me. I would recommend anyone who

finds themselves in a similar situation to investigate this procedure. I'm glad I had it done."

"It's very exciting to see patients like Vanessa go on to lead a normal and healthy life after a procedure like an ablation," said Dr. Chawla. "I'm happy for her."

And now Barkdoll and her fiancé, Dustin, look forward to their fall wedding in Vinton, which will feature a lot of dancing.

**To learn more about St. Luke's Heart Care Services call 319/369-8909.**

