

## **Hello Everyone – Greetings from Language School:**

Many of you do not yet know what has taken place this month. Please forgive me for taking this long to send you this update.

On March 2<sup>nd</sup> we took Beth to the doctor here in San Jose, Costa Rica, because she wasn't feeling well. He admitted her for testing and she became progressively worse over the next 24 hours. They determined the problem to be with her heart and looked for coronary obstructions but there were none. A mapping study of her heart's electrical system was completed and it became evident that she would need a permanent pacemaker, which was implanted on March 3<sup>rd</sup>.

While recovering, Beth developed some secondary problems including massive internal bleeding into her leg at the site where they went in twice for the above-mentioned tests. She lost two liters of blood and 3 different donors from the missionary and language school community here provided enough blood for her to recover somewhat normally, although today is March 22<sup>nd</sup> and she is still in a lot of pain and discomfort. She's been home with us now since the 12<sup>th</sup>.

To give an idea of how complicated her medical problems were, a total of 217 separate medicines were ordered and used on Beth while she was in the hospital, including morphine. She is still on painkillers and several other meds now that she is home with us. She has difficulty walking, and especially with stairs. Sleeping at night is also difficult for Beth.

The good news is that the pacemaker is doing fine – and that's the main thing. The hematoma should be completely gone by sometime in May, so eventually we should be able to get back to a normal life.

Though our language studies have been set back, we should be able to eventually continue and perhaps even catch up with our class. Beth goes back tomorrow to her first class since all this happened.

## **What Caused It**

If you don't have time to read this, that's fine. I'm a bit concerned that I may have already given too many details, but some may be interested in the reason for why this happened.

First of all, Beth does not have "clogged arteries" and did not have a heart attack, or cardiac arrest. What she did have was something called 3<sup>rd</sup> Degree Heart Block, which has to do with the electrical system of the heart, not the 'plumbing'.

Beth may have a condition called Sleep Apnea, which might be caused by her being overweight. I think that Sleep Apnea is when you stop breathing for short periods of time during your sleep, and then have to fight for air, so to speak – but I am not an expert. We didn't even know she was experiencing this. The doctor said she has probably had this for a long time, perhaps even a matter of years. When she is well enough, he wants to order a sleep study to verify whether or not she actually has sleep apnea.

Because of the (suspected) sleep apnea, Beth was experiencing high blood pressure in the nights and the walls of her heart began to thicken and scar tissue eventually formed, thus impeding the electrical signal from passing through. Eventually it got to the point where she was feeling ill, and that is when she went to the doctor. Please understand that this is a very, very rudimentary explanation, and that I don't claim to be a medical person at all.

The hypertension went undetected. Beth has had two complete physicals including one before we left the States and apparently they showed that everything was fine because the high blood pressure was only occurring at night while she was sleeping...

We thank God that the medical personnel and facilities here are as good as they are. If this had happened in Vanuatu or some other such place I don't know what would have happened, but I thank God today that Beth is still here.

## **Laptop Stolen**

To add insult to injury, a thief stole our laptop from Beth's hospital room while I was assisting her in walking down the hallway, only a few short meters from the room. Hospital surveillance has him on videotape, but he disappeared out onto the streets of San Jose, and will probably never be found. This has also hindered me from being in contact with friends and loved ones at home at this critical time.

Our home church (Malaga Assembly of God), which gave us that laptop shortly before we came here, has taken a collection and came up with enough money – or more than enough – to replace it. In two weeks the director of the language school will be visiting the States and will come back with a new one that I will order online and have shipped to his stateside address. I thank God for His people, who have been so supportive through all of this.

The hospital, "Clinica Biblica" was started by an American missionary couple back in 1929, and today has grown to become what is probably the best medical facility in Costa Rica.

Flowers were brought to Beth, from the CINCEL (language school) community. Emily and I became her primary care-givers, both in the hospital and also here at home. Beth is doing more and more each day, and it will be pretty hard to hold her back when she decides it's time to get going! God is certainly not through with her yet.

We love you all so much, and thank you so much for your support and prayers at this time.

~ The Pikes

## ***MESSAGE TO CHURCHES AND FRIENDS FROM BETH***

Thank you so very much for your prayers for me over the past few weeks. I definitely experienced several miracles – things that were not possible without God. I went into 3<sup>rd</sup> degree heart block while in the hospital on the night of March 2<sup>nd</sup> and the following morning the doctor told me that I almost died – not from a blockage of my coronary arteries but from a complete electrical blockage to my heart. Following that there were other unforeseen complications including losing 2 liters of blood that went into my leg where they had gone in with the scope. Here again I believe that the Lord stopped the bleeding, because even the doctors said that what happened was not “scientifically possible”.

It was not my time, and I will never forget the work with my own family and in the mission field that God still has for me to do. I am still getting better from the 2 liters of blood that went into my leg (hematoma), and with the pacemaker now in many ways I feel better than I have for a long time. I give the glory and thanks to my faithful God who kept me here because He’s not done with me yet!

~ Beth Pike

April 2009