

“During those long, dark nights following my stroke, I prayed that I would make it. Suddenly, I was transferred to a new hospital to be taught how to live a full life with half a body.”

– Harold L., Client

Cerebral vascular accident (CVA) *Advances and second chances*

Background:

At the age of 49, Harold L. was diagnosed with hypertension. He was otherwise healthy and enjoyed operating the machine shop that he inherited from his father. He worked 12-hour days, 6 days a week. One morning his speech became slurred, and he could not keep his balance. He looked at his watch. It was 5:00 am. Next thing he knew, Peter, his shop foreman, was sitting beside him as he was rushed to the emergency room in an ambulance. During the transport, the paramedics noticed that Harold was confused, very lethargic, and paralyzed on his left side. Once at the hospital, blood tests, computed tomography (CT) scans, neurologic examinations, and more patient history were needed to determine immediate treatment. A life-saving medication, used for management of stroke, was considered for Harold. This medication improves neurologic recovery and reduces the incidence of disability. It had to be administered within 3 hours after the onset of symptoms of stroke and after exclusion of hemorrhage. Unfortunately, at 6:50 am, Harold's CT scan result showed cerebral vascular accident (CVA) with intracerebral hemorrhage. Because of the hemorrhaging, Harold was not a candidate for the medication.

Harold's world was transformed into an intimidating environment. His intellect, sensation, perception, and movement were compromised. His diagnosis was right hemisphere stroke; therefore, the left side of his body was paralyzed. His paralysis worsened for 3 days and leveled off. His speech returned, but he exhibited poor judgment and increased impulsivity. He was unable to decipher distance and connections between objects; for example, he didn't know if his pants went on his arms or his legs. He wept constantly and didn't want anyone to see him. On the fifth day, the neurologist told Harold there was nothing more that could be done for him. He was transferred to an acute rehabilitation facility 3 hours later.

Rehabilitation:

The rehabilitation facility was light and airy, brightening Harold's mood. He spent time in therapy every morning and afternoon. His older sister, Carol, arrived from California to visit him and oversee the machine shop in his absence. He was relieved to see her. Carol noticed that Harold was powerless to help himself, and he complained that the nights were painfully long. Carol obtained a BAYADA Home Health Care brochure in the visitors lobby and contacted them. She arranged for a BAYADA Home Health Aide to provide comfort and care for Harold at night between 10:00 pm and 8:00 am daily in addition to the rehabilitation care he was receiving.

Harold states, “During those long, dark nights following my stroke, I prayed that I would make it. Suddenly, I was transferred to a new hospital to be taught how to live a full life with half a body. At times my mind painted pictures of complete disability that drove me to the edge of despair. When those thoughts enveloped me, I reached out to Doreen, my home health aide. She took my hand, and her warm smile comforted me.”

Harold's first BAYADA Therapist was Jane G. In 25 days, she helped him progress from lying in bed to getting out of bed, getting into the wheelchair, and rolling himself around the facility independently. He could brush his teeth, wash his face, comb his hair, don his socks and robe, and go to the bathroom: all with one arm and leg. At night, Doreen R. would assist Harold to take a shower. Carol would visit and give Harold an update about the shop. Harold also longed to see his 25-year-old son, Glen. He and Harold had been very close until they had a falling out. Glen, who was 19, moved to Montana and hadn't spoken to his father since.

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Challenge:

The road from left-sided paralysis to functioning was a long and arduous one. It was fraught with hardships and victories. One challenge was daily cognitive training, during which time Harold was asked many of the same questions repeatedly. Harold compared it to a never-ending FBI investigation; only he was the one being investigated. He also used the metronome machine to retrain his brain. After 45 days, Harold was able to walk with a three-pronged cane. He was able to feed himself after set-up. Discharge was scheduled for day 50. Sharon L., a registered nurse (RN) clinical manager from BAYADA, visited Harold and then stopped by his home to complete her nursing assessment with recommendations for home health care. Victory meant going home. Harold was scared at the thought but ready for the challenge. He said goodbye to the rehabilitation team that had brought him so far.

Sharon said, "I could sense Harold's anxiety. It was important that he be involved with planning his discharge and meet me ahead of time. He asked questions and made suggestions. He knew he would see me when he arrived home. This allayed his fears."

Goals Attained:

- Carol arranged to take a leave of absence from her job to stay with Harold.
- Carol and Harold met with Gloria P., RN, the facility nurse case manager, and planned the discharge along with Sharon, his BAYADA clinical manager.
- Harold's medical equipment was delivered to his home the day before his discharge. It included a wheelchair, transfer shower bench, cane, commode, extremity splints, and adaptive equipment. Grab bars were installed in the bathroom along with non-slip mats for the shower.
- BAYADA provided nursing visits and physical and occupational therapy, in addition Doreen stayed on as his home health aide.
- The home health care was authorized by his insurance company.
- Dr. Kim R., Harold's primary care physician, was advised Harold was coming home.
- An emergency plan was written for home safety.
- Van transportation was set up to take Harold home.

Outcomes:

Harold's BAYADA care team of nurses and therapists made home visits for three months to acclimate him to his home environment. With a focus on maximizing Harold's level of functioning and restoring his everyday activities, Harold's recovery progressed well beyond his expectations. Doreen remained his home health aide for 14 months. With his second chance in life, Harold wanted a second chance with his son, Glen. Carol found Glen's address on the Internet and called him. Glen arrived 5 days later. After a healthy catharsis, their relationship was renewed. They can be found at the shop each day, where Glen is training to take over his father's business.

Carol said, "Harold is gaining confidence every day. He always looks at his watch at 5:00 am and is so thankful for his progress, knowing that he was afforded a second chance with his life. His home care team pressed him to make gains in his home exercise program when he was feeling discouraged. He was encouraged to use his sense of humor to move past his frustrations at home. Doreen was invaluable in retraining Harold to provide his own self-care. She intervened when necessary and supported his efforts." Carol added, "I had no clue how to help Harold after the stroke. I felt very alone and ill-equipped. Thanks to BAYADA, we both made it."