

Doctors performed cardioversion procedure without blood thinners

Patient died of a stroke due to medical error.

Dan Johnson (not his real name) was a loving husband, father, and grandfather. Those that knew him said his smile and laugh would brighten even the darkest room. Dan and his wife, Ruth (not her real name), lived in central Florida and were very active. They drove their scooters around town, played with their grandchildren, kayaked, and traveled. They had been married for 50 years and were truly the light of each other's life.

In 2012, Dan visited a cardiologist after experiencing shortness of breath. The cardiologist advised him that he had atrial fibrillation – an abnormal heart rhythm. She assured Dan that she could “shock” his heart back into rhythm using a procedure called cardioversion. Cardioversion customarily calls for a patient to receive blood thinners before, during, and after the procedure to prevent blood clots from forming and coming loose when the electrical charge is administered. The cardiologist conducted the procedure on Dan, but failed to administer the blood thinners. Two days after the cardioversion, Dan suffered a stroke and was rushed back to the hospital. The electrical charge that Dan had received during the cardioversion had sent a blood clot from his heart to his brain. Compounding the crisis, the neurologist treating Dan for the stroke failed to administer a tissue plasminogen activator (TPA) – a critical drug used to break up blood clots if administered within four hours. Dan died two days later.

The sudden death of her very active husband was incredibly difficult for Ruth and her family. Struggling with the circumstances, Ruth contacted SDSBS attorneys **Chris Searcy** and **Karen Terry** for advice. Their investigation revealed that Dan should never have endured a cardioversion without receiving blood thinners. Failure to do so caused Dan to have a stroke. Additionally, medical experts stated that the neurologist should have administered TPA by injection when Dan did suffer a stroke and was taken back



to the hospital. Had Dan received the TPA injection, he would likely have survived. Weeks before the case was scheduled for trial, Mr. Searcy and Ms. Terry were able to obtain a substantial confidential settlement for Ruth and her family.

Ruth continues to live in the home she once shared with Dan. Missing his companionship every day, Ruth eventually adopted a small dog – a Maltese she named “Danny Boy” as a tribute to her husband. ◆

At left, “Danny Boy”.