



Ask your physician to schedule your CT Calcium Scoring test at Mercy Medical Center at (319) 398-6868.

## TO HEART HEALTH

# Cruising

Phil Murray looked good, felt great and was set to celebrate his 35th wedding anniversary with a Caribbean cruise the next month and then expand his window blinds installation business upon his return.

But first, Phil thought it was a good idea for himself and his wife, Chrissy, to get physical exams by their longtime family physician, Dr. John Brownell, MercyCare Johnson Avenue.

"I thought it would give us peace of mind,"

says Phil, age 54. "I looked at it as we'd hit a 'certain age.'"

That philosophy saved Phil's life.

Phil and Chrissy each have a family history of heart disease. Phil's dad died of a heart attack at

age 63; his grandfather at age 51. Chrissy's brother had his first heart attack at 39 and, four heart attacks later, he died at age 48.

A smoker since his teens and former owner of discount tobacco stores, Phil went to his check-up foremost concerned about his lungs. Dr. Brownell gave him a prescription for Zyban and Phil has not had a cigarette since.

At their exams, Dr. Brownell urged both Phil and Chrissy to go to Mercy Medical Center for a CT Calcium Scoring test, a screening exam for people who do not yet exhibit symptoms of heart disease. This quick, non-invasive screening detects the presence of calcium in the arteries leading to the heart, indicating that atherosclerosis (narrowing of the arteries) has begun. A 64-slice CT (Computerized Tomography) scanner is used to perform the scan.

"I remember strongly recommending that Chrissy and Phil have the CT calcium scoring screening at Mercy due to their family histories and the fact that Phil had elevated cholesterol levels," says Dr. Brownell. "I let them know the cost (\$169) of the exam is not covered by insurance, but is worth it just for peace of mind alone, even if nothing is wrong."

Chrissy had a reassuring score of 0; Phil's was a startling 140!

"They told me my score was pretty high and to make another appointment with Dr. Brownell," says Phil. Dr. Brownell next recommended a stress test for Phil at Cedar Rapids Heart Center, 2007 Blair Ferry Road, Hiawatha.

The stress test was a major turning point for Phil. First, he had an ultrasound and then he stepped onto the treadmill with two staff members nearby. Suddenly, he was off the treadmill and on an examination table surrounded by care providers. Cardiologist Henry

Riter, MD, quickly ordered another ultrasound to assess what was occurring with his heart. Chrissy got a frantic call from Phil and quickly joined him at C.R. Heart.

"Everyone kept asking me how the pain was," remembers Phil. "I didn't have any pain and asked them if something was wrong with me."

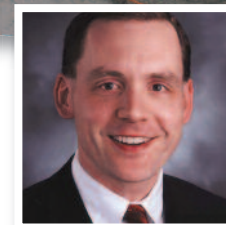
Dr. Riter explains, "Mr. Murray's heart function was normal under resting conditions. On peak stress pictures, there was evidence of a severe, extensive blood flow problem. This is often seen in significant coronary disease. Phil had no symptoms at rest, but subtle chest tightness and pressure with exercise, which is not uncommon in cardiac patients."

Dr. Riter set up an appointment for Phil at Mercy's Cath Lab to insert a stent, a small mesh tube that opens narrowed arteries. But, the doctor soon realized Phil's case was too extensive for stents and Dr. Mir Wasif Ali, a cardiothoracic surgeon at Physicians' Clinic of Iowa, arrived at the Cath Lab to discuss bypass surgery.

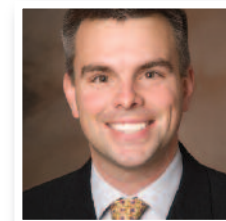
"Dr. Ali couldn't believe Phil didn't have any symptoms," says Chrissy. "He explained about his heart and how bad it was, saying it was what they consider a 'widowmaker.' If he had had a heart attack, it would have been all over."

After hearing about the couple's fully pre-paid cruise plans, Dr. Ali jockeyed his schedule around, telling them they would make that cruise! After a six-and-one-half hour open heart surgery, Phil began rehabilitation and—just five weeks later—he and Chrissy boarded the cruise ship for a relaxing Caribbean voyage.

Now both Phil and Chrissy advise their friends to have a CT Calcium Scoring test. Phil adds, "If you don't go this extra mile, you are risking something happening. And then you don't get to live to enjoy retirement."



John Brownell, MD  
MercyCare Johnson Avenue



Henry Riter, MD  
Cedar Rapids Heart Center



Mir Wasif Ali, MD  
Physicians' Clinic of Iowa



Phil and Chrissy Murray celebrated their 35th wedding anniversary with a cruise. A month before the trip, each had a CT Calcium Scoring test at Mercy—Chrissy received good results, but Phil discovered his health was in jeopardy.