Dwane King walked away from a stroke thanks to fast action and UK HealthCare

When a stroke happens, time makes all the difference. Getting the right treatment fast can be the difference between life and death, between severe impairment and full recovery.

Fast treatment made that kind of difference for Dwane King, The Livingston, Ky., man was on his way to the grocery with his wife on a Sunday in May 2011 when he noticed his left hand and then his arm begin to lose feeling. At the store, he bent down to tie his shoe – and found he couldn’t. “It was like it was asleep,” he said, “And I had no control over it.” Soon his left leg was also going numb.

Dwane, a retired metalworker, had already had several heart attacks and knew that his history of heart disease made him a prime candidate for stroke, also sometimes called a brain attack.

A stroke occurs when blood flow is interrupted to part of the brain, often, as in Dwane’s case, caused by a blood clot blocking an artery in the brain. Without blood to supply oxygen and nutrients and to remove waste products, brain cells quickly begin to die. Depending on the region of the brain affected, a stroke may cause paralysis, speech impairment, loss of memory and reasoning ability, coma, or death.

More than half a million people in the United States have a new or recurrent stroke every year. Those who are able to get treatment within three hours have the best chance of recovery.

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Because they realized what was happening, the Kings were able to act quickly. The couple immediately got back in the car and headed to their local hospital, Rockcastle Regional Medical Center, a stroke affiliate of UK HealthCare. They arrived just three or four minutes later.

The medication is meant to dissolve the clot to get blood flowing again and halt the damage to the brain. “They were giving me the medicine as they loaded me into the helicopter. I wasn’t at the emergency room more than 20 to 25 minutes total.”

Dwane arrived at UK Albert B. Chandler Hospital the very day the stroke unit in the new pavilion opened to patients. “Really, I didn’t get to see much,” he said. “But they took excellent care of me from the time I got there to the time I left.”

Dwane didn’t have much time to check out the new facilities. He was home again in two days. “They told my wife at the emergency room I was having a full-blown stroke, getting bad in a hurry. Two days later, I’m going home.”

Having people who knew what to do and did it quickly made the difference. “Because of the expertise of UK HealthCare, I walked out of that hospital by myself,” he said.

Today, Dwane has few residual effects from the stroke. He’s back to spending his days with his great-grandson and enjoying his retirement.

For information on UK HealthCare stroke affiliates around Kentucky and on stroke treatment at UK HealthCare, call 1-800-333-8874 or 859-257-1000. You may also visit our website at ukhealthcare.uky.edu.