

Cardiac Rehabilitation: Revitalizing Hearts and Lives

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Carol Eggert
Patient

Carmen Terzic, M.D., Ph.D., chair, Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation: The most sacred thing that the patient has is their life, their health, and they are putting those things in your hand. And the life of this patient is, of course, his life but also other people depend on these patients.

Our patient will come to the Cardiac Rehabilitation Program with heart problems, but they also have, for example, back pain. They have a history of stroke. They have a history of knee pain, and those problems may impair their ability to exercise or to incorporate their lifestyle change that they need in order to improve their heart.

Carol Eggert, patient: After my bypass surgery, our grandson was sitting on my lap and I was reading to him and he said, "Mimi, I've never sat on your lap before. I always sat next to you. I don't think you had a lap before, did you?"

Before we moved here from Illinois, I had been diagnosed with type 2 diabetes, and it kept on getting worse, and so that's how I came to be connected with Mayo. Now that I have lost the weight, I no longer have diabetes.

Dr. Terzic: We don't see the patient as only patient or only a heart. We see them as a whole individual. We see the patient, and we introduce all the changes that they need to do in order to improve their heart function, make the heart stronger, and also to prevent another heart event.

Eggert: My sister had extremely high blood pressure. She had a genetic heart defect. I also had the bicuspid valve, but my valve was not working well at all. After my surgery, I had the cardiac rehab and now I just have so much more energy.

Dr. Terzic: This is our role: to help them to go back to work, to play with their children, to be with their family.

Eggert: They were concerned about me as a person. They got to know me. I wasn't a number. I wasn't a birth date. I was Carol Eggert. I was — I was me, and I just so appreciated that.