

From the Heart

UPDATES FROM THE MINNEAPOLIS HEART INSTITUTE FOUNDATION®



SPRING 2019

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Creating a world without heart and vascular disease

Dear Friends,

On behalf of all of us at the Minneapolis Heart Institute Foundation® (MHIF), I am so honored that you are a part of this amazing family. Thanks to your support and interest, you help our world-class researchers find new ways to save and improve lives, creating the opportunity for more families to create lasting happy memories.



The stories in this issue are really all about you. In **Innovation in Action**, the Finney family's connection and motivation are highlighted showing how their generous gifts are helping to move forward exciting new research to help people with abnormal heart rhythms. Thank you Nigel and Jeanne!

In **Stories of Impact**, you meet Natasha Karn, who has a family-based genetic disorder that eventually caused her to suffer a heart attack when she was 36 weeks pregnant with her third child. Natasha's now helping MHIF educate more women about heart disease and why they need to take care of themselves *first*, so they can take care of their families. Thank you Natasha!

In **Take Care of Your Heart**, learn more about the latest cholesterol guidelines, which emphasize that despite a heart-healthy diet, some individuals (including those with a family condition or history of heart disease), continue to have an elevated risk for heart disease and should discuss a multi-faceted treatment approach with their physician.

Lastly, in **Let's Stay Connected**, see recent MHIF news and events. If you haven't joined us for an event before, I hope to have the opportunity to welcome you into this family sometime soon.

Thank you for being part of MHIF's bold vision to create a world without heart and vascular disease for families across the globe.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kristine Fortman". The signature is written in a fluid, cursive style.

Kristine Fortman, PhD

CEO, Minneapolis Heart Institute Foundation

NATASHA KARN:

Thankful for Life After a Heart Attack While Pregnant

Natasha Karn's advice to other women is simple: "Take care of yourself. Because if you don't, you can't take care of your family and your career and all those things that you always prioritize. Take care of yourself first, because I sure didn't, and it nearly cost me my life."

Natasha, a Twin Cities attorney, was 36 weeks pregnant with her third child in February 2018 when she felt chest pains. Given she was 39 years old, she chalked it up to being older and thought perhaps it was just heartburn. After the pain got worse over a couple days, she was told to go to the emergency room, where she later suffered a heart attack and received a stent to treat a blockage in one of her arteries.

After the procedure, Dr. Retu Saxena, a Minneapolis Heart Institute® cardiologist and Minneapolis Heart Institute Foundation® (MHIF) researcher, diagnosed Natasha with a congenital condition called familial hypercholesterolemia (FH). FH is a family-based genetic disorder where people have much higher cholesterol levels than expected, at much younger ages. It produces aggressive plaque buildup in the arteries and can significantly increase risk for heart disease. Natasha's father died of a heart attack when he was about her age.

Although Natasha was diagnosed with high cholesterol and prescribed medication when she was 25, she never started it, explaining that she continually "put it on the backburner" because she was either pregnant, nursing or trying to get pregnant.

When an angiogram revealed her blockages and she was told about needing a stent, Natasha said, "It was terrifying, it was shocking, it was so much to take in. I thought, I'm 39 years old, I'm pregnant ... this doesn't make any sense, but yet I probably should've known because of my family history of heart disease."

Three weeks after her stent, Natasha and her significant other Steve joyously welcomed a healthy baby girl via C-section. Since then, Natasha committed to adopting healthier eating and exercise habits and helping MHIF in its efforts to increase awareness and educate more women about their risk for heart disease.

"I encourage women to get their cholesterol checked, not to ignore any symptoms and not to just procrastinate," said Natasha. "There's never going to be a good time to go into the doctor, so just go."

Hear Natasha share her story in Twin Cities in Motion's *Move. Together.* podcast, available at mplsheart.org/natasha.



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Electrophysiology Research

The Finney Family's Generous Giving Supports the Innovation Fund

Nigel Finney and his wife, Dr. Jeanne Finney, were inspired to donate to the Minneapolis Heart Institute Foundation® (MHIF) Innovation Fund after they both retired about a decade ago and moved to Arizona from Minnesota. As a former physician in the Twin Cities, Jeanne had long been acquainted with the work of the Minneapolis Heart Institute® and its physicians. Nigel, who retired from the Metropolitan Airports Commission, first became familiar with MHI's work in 2006 after suffering a serious episode of an abnormal heartbeat during a long-distance run. Dr. Bill Katsiyannis diagnosed him with ventricular tachycardia (V-tach), an abnormally fast heart rhythm in the ventricles, and Nigel received an implantable cardioverter defibrillator (ICD).

"We kept going back to the Twin Cities for check-ups on an annual basis, and we thought we ought to do something to be a little bit more involved with the foundation and support some of the research efforts that were going on," said Nigel. "Of course, my particular interests were related to heart rhythm issues. The more information that's available from research, the more physicians can deal with issues across the spectrum, from atrial fibrillation to the V-tach that I experienced."

Much of MHIF's transformational impact begins with simple, yet powerful questions from physicians themselves: Why? Through MHIF's Innovation Fund, MHIF research teams are provided with the resources necessary to answer those critical questions,



The Finneys and Dr. Katsiyannis

share the findings with professionals worldwide, and ultimately improve the quality and length of patients' lives.

Accordingly, through the MHIF Innovation Fund, the Finney's generous donations are helping to support investigator-initiated research specifically in the area of electrophysiology. Electrophysiologists, advanced practitioners and skilled technicians, in concert with the Minneapolis Heart Institute®, direct one of the largest and most comprehensive arrhythmia programs in the nation. From research that improves the treatment of abnormal heart rhythms, to studies assessing the effectiveness of ICDs, MHIF is changing outcomes.

Nigel's electrophysiologist, Dr. Katsiyannis, is an MHIF board member and is co-director of a unique program called the Genetic

Electrophysiologists, advanced practitioners and skilled technicians, in concert with the Minneapolis Heart Institute®, direct one of the largest and most comprehensive arrhythmia programs in the nation.

Arrhythmia Center, which maintains a registry of patients that allows researchers to study rare inheritable heart rhythm disorders. Other MHIF research teams have been involved in important advances in treatment for atrial fibrillation, which is one of the most common heart rhythm conditions. In multiple major trials, they have advanced the success rate for a treatment procedure called ablation to more than 90 percent in people with intermittent atrial fibrillation.

The Finneys receive regular updates from MHIF on the research and are pleased to

see how they are helping make an impact to help improve the lives of patients with all types of rhythm disorders, whether common or more complex.

“From the perspective of someone who’s giving donations, that’s really important because you know where the money is going,” explained Nigel. “You know what it’s being used for and you get a sense of ownership of some of the work that’s being done.”

While Nigel is no longer doing 50- or 100-mile runs, he considers his health and quality of life today to be great. “We still do a lot of biking and a lot of hiking, and a lot of the hiking is at altitude or places like Grand Canyon and the Colorado mountains. So we’re doing just about everything we want to at the moment.”

The Innovation Fund helps support and grow investigator-initiated research projects by providing research staff and scientific services, including biostatistics and technology. **For more information, visit mplsheart.org/innovationfund.**

SHOUT-OUTS OF APPRECIATION

Special thanks to the following important friends and donors of MHIF for your support in hosting several small group luncheons to share MHIF’s work and vision with friends.

- Shirley Bentdahl, Mike and Glenda Dubes, Nigel and Jeanne Finney, Tom and Margaret Johnson, Paul and Jeanne Ravich, Barbara Thorndike and Butch Ames hosted an event in Scottsdale, Ariz., in January
- Sally and Dr. Robert Hauser, Linda and Daniel Pelak; Susan Stielow, Betty and Dr. Robert Van Tassel hosted an event in Naples, Fla., in February



NEWS/EVENTS



On Feb. 9, 2019, MHIF was proud to sponsor the **Twin Cities in Motion's Valentine's Day TC 5K** at Lake Nokomis in Minneapolis. While the temperature didn't reach 0°F, more than 1,000 hardy runners and walkers joined in the event. This year's race helped raise awareness for women's heart health research. Thank you to Natasha Karn, a heart attack patient who shared her story along with Dr. Retu Saxena, cardiologist and MHIF researcher in Twin Cities in Motion's *Move. Together.* podcast. Read Natasha's Story of Impact in this newsletter.

Did you know 5 million Americans have been diagnosed with heart valve



disease and each year approximately 22,000 people in the U.S. die from heart valve disease? On Feb. 21, 2019, MHIF hosted an educational event for **National Heart Valve Disease Awareness Day** at the Golden Valley Country Club. More than 165 community members learned about the public health epidemic of heart valve disease, how it is diagnosed, and the latest in research and treatments. The event featured presentations from Minneapolis Heart Institute® physicians, MHIF research staff and a patient panel.

This spring, tune in to 18 different Minnesota community radio stations to hear people from all walks of life sharing their stories about living with, treating, researching, or losing a loved one to heart valve disease. The on-air radio segments are part of **MHIF's "Take Control of Heart Health" educational campaign** in partnership with Ampers (Association of Minnesota Public Educational Radio Stations) Diverse Radio for Minnesota's Communities. Listen to the stories at ampers.org/category/take-control-of-your-health/heart-health. Learn more about heart valve disease through the MHIF Valve Science Center, mplsheart.org/valvesciencecenter.



On March 14, 2019, MHIF hosted **"Life After Stent"** at the Edina Country Club. The educational event was designed for people or their loved ones who had angioplasty with or without stenting. A panel of cardiologists shared information with 122 attendees on coronary artery disease and current research, when and why angioplasty may be needed, and what patients can expect going forward.



**SAVE THE DATE
August 8, 2019**

MHIF will host its annual **Hope, Health & Humor** event focused on women's heart health. Please visit mplsheart.org/womens-event for more information.



2018 CHOLESTEROL GUIDELINES:

What You Should Know



In late 2018, the American College of Cardiology and American Heart Association released the 2018 Cholesterol Guidelines. Dr. Michael Miedema, a cardiologist and MHIF researcher, served as a member of the evidence review committee for the guidelines. The guidelines are an update to the 2013 guidelines and serve to provide additional information for physicians on how to treat cholesterol in patients. For some individuals, despite a heart-healthy diet, their risk for heart disease remains elevated, and they should consider medication to lower their cholesterol.

Statin therapy recommendations for individuals with certain health conditions
The guidelines recommend statin therapy in addition to a healthful lifestyle in the following cases:

- If you already have heart disease: For individuals who remain at high risk despite statin therapy and a healthy lifestyle, additional cholesterol-lowering medications may need to be added.
- If you have diabetes and are age 40–75.
- If you are age 20 or older and have a very high LDL >190 (known as familial hypercholesterolemia): Talk with your doctor about taking a high-intensity statin and possibly other cholesterol medications to lower your risk. If you are a woman who may become pregnant, let your doctor know before starting cholesterol-lowering medications.

Statin therapy recommendations based on age and heart disease risk level

If you don't have any of the above conditions (heart disease, diabetes or familial hypercholesterolemia), **ask your doctor to use a risk estimator to calculate your risk for heart disease.** Together, you can discuss your risk level and health history and decide if taking a statin is right for you.

Based on your age and risk level for heart disease, taking a statin may be recommended in the following cases:

- If you are 20–39 and your lifetime risk is elevated, your LDL is 160 mg/dl or higher, or you have a family history of early heart disease. If you are a woman who may become pregnant, let your doctor know before starting cholesterol-lowering medications.
- If you are age 40–75 and are at moderate CVD risk (between 5 and 7.5%), especially if you have additional risk factors such as a family history of early heart disease, and for women, a history of preeclampsia or early menopause.

A statin is recommended if:

- You are age 40–75 and your 10-year risk is between 7.5–20%.
- You are age 40–75 and your 10-year risk is >20% (full dose statin is recommended).

Visit MHIF on YouTube to see a video of Dr. Miedema summarizing the new Cholesterol Guidelines, <https://bit.ly/2ONks6p>.



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