

'Good people' give man new life

Heart attack victim thanks students who revived him, doctors who saved him

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The Journal News

One might say Jacob Klang was in the company of "good people" for the past month. The teacher collapsed in front of nearly 200 students in a study hall at the Ohr Hameir Theological Seminary in Cortlandt on Nov. 7. Instantly, students jumped to his aid, one calling 911, another running to get the school's oxygen tank and others taking turns performing cardiopulmonary resuscitation for nearly 10 minutes until an ambulance arrived.

He went into cardiac arrest and no one knows why. The 37-year-old father of six from Spring Valley was otherwise healthy.

He lay in a coma at Westchester Medical Center for nine days. His organs were failing. His mother and wife slept in the waiting room for nearly two weeks. Doctors told them to pray.

Several members of a cardiology team worked to keep his heart artificially pumping using a relatively new device. So new, it was the first time a Westchester hospital had ever used it on a patient. The results were not guaranteed, but doctors thought Klang was "the right patient at the right time," said Dr. Melvin Weiss, chief of cardiology.

It worked and yesterday Klang was released from the hospital with a clean bill of health.

"There's a saying in the Talmud: God

Please see HEART, 10A

VALHALLA



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Jacob Klang, 37, center, of Spring Valley says goodbye to Dr. Melvin Weiss, chief of cardiology. Klang was discharged yesterday from Westchester Medical Center after suffering a heart attack Nov. 7 while teaching in Cortlandt. Students performed cardiopulmonary resuscitation until paramedics arrived. With them is Dr. Raja Varma, who treated Klang.

It's heart attack season

December and January are the deadliest months for heart disease, and many of the things that make the season merry are culprits: Rich meals, more alcohol — and all that extra stress. But what may make the Christmas coronary more deadly is denial. It's not uncommon for people to initially shrug off chest pain as indigestion. Research suggests they're more reluctant for a run to the emergency room when it means disrupting a holiday gathering, or if they've traveled to a strange city — meaning they arrive sicker. And every minute counts. **Details, 4B**

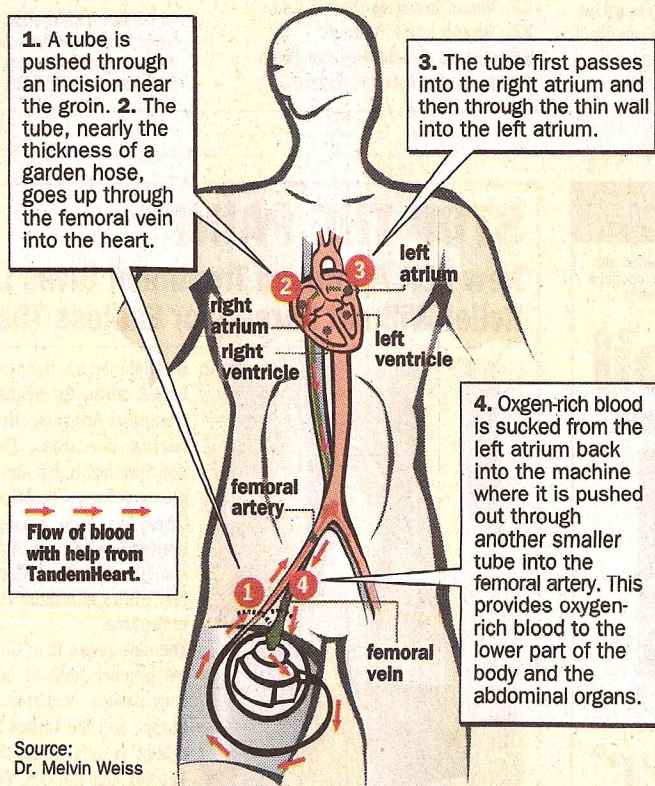


On the Web

For a gallery of photos, go to LoHud.com.

Doing the job of the left ventricle

For five days, Klang's heart rested as a device called the TandemHeart system pumped blood through his body.



**There's a saying in the Talmud:
God sends down good things to the world
through the agency of good people.
These are all good people.**

Elya Klang, 68, whose son suffered the heart attack

Teacher goes from near death to recovery

HEART, from 1A

sends down good things to the world through the agency of good people. These are all good people," Klang's father, Elya Klang, 68, said as the family thanked doctors and nurses before they left.

For five days, Klang's heart rested as a device called the TandemHeart did the pumping for him. Doctors pushed a catheter, or a tube, through an incision near Klang's groin. The tube, nearly the thickness of a garden hose, went up through his femoral vein into his heart. First into the right atrium and then through the thin wall into the left atrium.

Oxygen-rich blood is sucked from the left atrium back into the machine, where the blood passes through a centrifuge and is pushed out through another smaller tube into the femoral artery. This supplies oxygen-rich blood to the lower part of the body and the abdominal organs.

It does the job of the left ventricle, the main muscle of the heart, pumping blood into all parts of the body.

Without the assistance in transporting oxygen-rich blood to the failing organs, Klang would not have recovered so successfully, doctors said.

In one month's time, Jacob Klang went from near death to a full recovery. His brain is functioning well, although he has no memory of the events that led him to waking from a coma in a hospital bed.

Doctors say he doesn't need cognitive or physical therapy, which is extremely rare for a patient who has undergone such an ordeal, said Dr. Raja Varma, a cardiologist fellow who treated Klang the entire time.

In a few weeks, test results should come back that might give doctors a better idea of why this happened to Klang. Unlike most



Tania Savayan/The Journal News

Jacob Klang, 37, left, of Spring Valley and his father, Elya Klang, 68, of Brooklyn gather before the younger Klang's discharge from Westchester Medical Center. "There's a saying in the Talmud: God sends down good things to the world through the agency of good people. These are all good people," said Elya Klang of those who helped his son.

heart patients, his arteries weren't blocked. His heart is weak, not pumping correctly, but there's no indication exactly why.

"That's the mystery," Weiss said.

Doctors are concerned he might have a heart disease that may have implications for other family members, such as Klang's identical twin brother.

After resting at home for the next month or two, Klang said, he will likely return to teaching at the Cortlandt yeshiva.

"I think I've changed as a person," Klang said in a whisper, his voice not having recovered from the breathing tube in his throat. "I look at life differently. I won't take anything for granted."

Family members, happy to have him home tonight for the first night of Hanukkah, aren't taking anything for granted either. They thanked everyone at the hospital and the school.

"Our biggest gratitude is to God for creating this miracle," said his brother-in-law, Shaul Seifler, 35, of

Monsey.

As for the first responders, the brave students who kept calm during the initial crisis, Klang's wife, Esther, 32, was at a loss for words.

"What do you say to someone who saves your husband's life?" she said. "There's not enough you can say to someone who has saved your whole world. 'Thank you' just isn't enough."

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