

Matt called me around 10:00 a.m., saying that something was wrong. “What’s wrong?” I asked. I didn’t think it was serious until he said he had lost muscle control in his arms and legs and had to crawl to the bedroom across the hall. I told him to call 911, but he said he couldn’t because the front door was locked and the paramedics could not get in without breaking the door. I immediately called my second oldest daughter and asked if she could go over and check things out.

My daughter made it over to the house and called 911. She then called me and her tone of voice was very serious. She said the paramedics were on the way. While waiting for the paramedics, she described the situation. Matt was on the floor in the bedroom across the hall from our bedroom, vomiting green stuff. The paramedics arrived shortly thereafter, loaded Matt in the ambulance and quickly headed out to the hospital. My daughter said they thought he was having a stroke. Trying to quell my growing panic, I hung up and headed for the hospital. My daughter and I arrived at the hospital at the same time, and I was expecting the worst.

As we walked into the emergency room, Matt was in the last bed in the room. The nurse immediately came and asked me several questions. I had not seen Matt yet, but as I stood there trying to answer her questions, I could see his legs sticking out from behind the curtain. She finally walked me over to Matt. I looked at him and I thought he looked at me with a glimmer of recognition. His legs and arms were shaking rapidly. I grabbed his hand in hopes it would help stop the shaking. All of sudden, he sat up and started to get violently sick, with more green stuff shooting out of his mouth. As I looked at my daughter, trying not to look at the green stuff, the nurse asked us to leave the room for a second. The other nurse that was in the room walked out with us.

She asked me, “What has been going on with your husband? Have you been out of the country? What has Matt been doing?” Although we hadn’t been out of the country that year, we were in Hawaii a few months earlier. Matt had also gone to Las Vegas in October, and he went to Ohio for Thanksgiving. In a few minutes, the nurse led us back into Matt’s room. While I stood next to the bed and attempted to talk to Matt, he began to make grunting noises. As I looked at him, I could see he was experiencing severe pain in his head. He then tried to say something to me, which was not in any language I knew. He looked at me as though I should have known what he was saying.

In a few minutes, he was getting violently sick again (more green stuff). At that moment, the nurses told my daughter and I, “We need to get Matt to MRI, to find out what’s going on in his head.” She walked us out to the ICU waiting room and said they were going to prepare a room and let us know when we could see him. A short time later we heard over the intercom “code blue, bed 4, code blue.” I looked at my daughter and said “that’s Matt’s bed.” I counted the beds in the emergency room and confirmed that was indeed Matt’s bed.

When the nurse had taken us to the waiting room, I remembered her saying “It won’t take long, we’re just preparing him for an MRI.” But, he never made it to the MRI room. I realized we had been in the waiting room for more than an hour and had not heard anything from the nurse. The person at the volunteer help desk noticed the same, and said she would check to see what was taking so long. During this waiting time, some of my family members came to join me—they knew I don’t like hospitals and needed support.

As another 30 minutes passed, a doctor and nurse finally came to me. The doctor (a neurosurgeon) said, “Your husband is very sick and we need to do emergency surgery.” I thought to myself, *this is not happening, this is just a bad dream!* The neurosurgeon said that he had to relieve the pressure in Matt’s brain, that he was bleeding and that they didn’t know the cause. But they had to do this surgery—now! As the doctor walked away, the nurse said we could see Matt and walk by his bed on his way to the surgery room. At this point, I hadn’t seen Matt for almost two hours, and when I did get to see him, what I saw was not Matt.

Matt was now on a ventilator, and he had some type of blue towel wrapped around his head. The surgeon told me about the procedure they would use in the upcoming surgery—a craniotomy. They would drill two holes in his head! I just could not imagine such a thing.

In the waiting room, my cell phone began to ring. It was Matt’s sister, the nurse. I told her that Matt was in surgery to relieve the pressure in his brain, and that at this point the doctor could not determine the cause. After we talked about medical stuff, she tried to comfort me. I said to her, “I think someone from your family should be here.” And she agreed.

As we continued to talk, the doctor and nurse walked into the waiting room to talk to me. Matt’s sister was able to listen to the conversation. The doctor said they had drilled two holes in Matt’s head, one to release the pressure and the other to monitor oxygen. He also asked the same questions the nurse had asked earlier (if we had been out of the country, etc.). I asked the doctor what was the cause, and he reluctantly said he didn’t know at this time. Doctors really can’t tell you what they don’t know, but he did say this was going to be the most critical time of his life. Matt was now in an induced coma for the next several weeks.

The doctor left the waiting room and the nurse remained to answer any questions that I had. Of course, I had nothing to say at the moment, only thoughts of what had just happened. By this time, all my family was with me in the waiting room in disbelief as well. There were some long moments of silence in the waiting room—I’m sure they were all saying a little prayer. Finally, the nurse said we were able to see Matt. What I saw was not what I expected—Matt was hooked up to what seemed to be a thousand machines. We all just cried. I asked one of my brothers to stay and say a prayer, and he did.

Walking out of Matt’s hospital room, my cell phone rang. It was Matt’s dad. He asked me how things were going. For the first time in my life, I had to say “not well.” I heard

nothing on the other end of the phone for a moment and then the both of us cried at the same time. I composed myself and answered his questions—we still knew nothing, except that Matt was in critical condition.

Since Matt was in ICU, he had a nurse by his side 24 hours a day. I asked the nurse on duty what I should expect, and she said this would be a very critical night for him. She said “If for some reason the pressure will not go down, they might have to do a bone flap” (remove part of his skull). I stood there for some time just staring at all the machines keeping Matt alive. It was very scary.

I went back to the waiting room and let other family members go in to see him. My cell phone continued to ring—this time it was Matt’s sister the nurse again. She said that Matt’s youngest brother from Ohio would be flying in the next day. We really had no idea what was going to happen throughout the night. Some of Matt’s co-workers were in the waiting room as well, and everyone was very shocked and concerned. Visiting hours were now long over, but of course I did not want to leave Matt. I was thinking he was going to wake up any minute and I wanted to be there for him.

The nurse reminded me that Matt was going to be in the coma for at least another 10 to 12 days and that I should go home and get some rest. She said she would call me if there were any changes or I could call her at anytime to check on Matt. She also told me that the doctor would be at the hospital at 8 a.m. My sister went home with me that night so I wouldn’t be alone. Around 3 a.m. I called the hospital to check on Matt, and the nurse said Matt was holding his own—no changes. I received a phone call around 5 a.m. from Matt’s dad saying he had decided to come to California as well. I was glad to hear it, even though I really didn’t know my father-in-law well. Actually, I hardly knew him at all.

The next morning I was up early. I was really up all night just waiting for the sun to come up. As I walked to Matt’s room, I noticed they had moved him to a room closer to the main nurse’s station. As I walked into the room, the neurosurgeon was checking on Matt. I asked the doctor how Matt was doing, and he said “He did better than I expected.” I was a little taken back by his answer. He also said he wasn’t sure what the cause of his problem was, but he speculated that it was cancer or a tumor. But he just wasn’t sure, because the CT scan was not clear as to what was wrong.