

Aquapheresis helps heart failure patients lose fluid faster

Zetna Morgan loves spending time outdoors. If not for his amputations, you'd never know he was living with diabetes and congestive heart failure. Depending on the season, you'll likely find him on his lawnmower or raking leaves.

But on this Saturday in October, Zetna was thankful just to be alive. A few days earlier, he was rushed to the Emergency Department, unable to breathe and with 20 to 30 pounds of fluid in his body.

Fluid – primarily salt and water – had built up in various locations in his body, causing him to swell in his legs, arms and stomach. Fluid eventually began entering his lungs, decreasing the oxygen in his bloodstream and causing him shortness of breath.

"I had to just about fight to breathe," Zetna said. "I couldn't eat nothing. I was in bad shape."

His wife, Katheryn, called Dr. Harry Morse, their longtime physician, when she saw her husband's condition was worsening and realized they needed to get to a hospital. They arrived at AnMed Health Medical Center and soon learned the hospital had new technology that could treat Zetna's condition. The Medical Center had recently received an aquapheresis machine, and Dr. Morse thought Zetna would be a good candidate for their first patient.

"We trust him, so we said, 'Yeah.' I'm glad we did 'cause it has been great," Zetna said.

Like Zetna, many congestive heart failure patients have to carefully manage their disease to avoid fluid overload. They're instructed to cut their salt intake and can be prescribed oral medicines like Lasix. But if fluid overload still happens, the only solution is often a hospital stay. Typical inpatient treatments use IV medicines to increase urine output.

Aquapheresis removes more salt than traditional treatment and provides a shorter hospital stay. The machine acts as a filtration system. It draws out the patient's blood, separates it from the excess salt and water, then returns the "clean" blood back to the patient's body. The excess fluid is collected in a bag for disposal.

Recent studies show that patients treated with aquapheresis over standard IV medicines see a 38 percent weight loss, a 50 percent reduction in re-hospitalization, a 63 percent reduction in total re-hospitalization days and a 52 percent reduction in emergency department or clinic visits.

As nurses checked the machine, Zetna was looking forward to going home.

"It's been wonderful," Katheryn said. "God saved his life."



Katheryn and Zetna Morgan



AnMed Health's Aquadex FlexFlow System

Caring for Congestive Heart Failure

AnMed Health provides a number of services to help residents manage heart disease and live fuller, healthier lives. If you or someone you love has congestive heart failure, check out the following:

- LifeChoice's Congestive Heart Failure Disease Management Program provides education and monitored exercise to help improve the quality of life of congestive heart failure patients. The program is open to anyone who has been diagnosed with heart failure upon referral by their health care practitioner. Call 864.716.6647 for more information.
- The Electric City Cardiovascular Support Group meets the second Tuesday of each month at LifeChoice. Call 864.512.2792 or 864.512.6640 for more information.