

Jim White – Stroke Survivor

Jim vividly remembers the Sunday afternoon in the middle of November 2019 when he experienced his stroke. He was standing at the kitchen counter preparing lunch for work the next day. He heard a loud buzzing in his left ear, felt weak and was unable to continue standing. Jim made it to his phone to call his girlfriend Cindy, who kept him calm while she called 911. Jim was taken by ambulance to Pembroke Regional Hospital.

Jim was not afraid once he arrived at the hospital because he knew that he would get the best care. The team at Pembroke Regional Hospital consulted with the stroke team in Ottawa via Telestroke which resulted in Jim being transferred by ambulance with a Nurse Escort to The Ottawa Hospital - Civic Campus. Once medically stable Jim was repatriated to Pembroke Regional Hospital where discharge planning took place.



Three weeks after his stroke Jim was able to return home from hospital. He was connected to the out-patient stroke rehabilitation program through Pembroke Regional Hospital. When COVID-19 put Ontario into a state of emergency, Jim's therapy, which was nearing completion had to be canceled. Jim has been staying as active as possible and continues to work on recovery with the tools provided in rehabilitation.

Jim couldn't say enough good things about the staff at both Pembroke Regional Hospital and The Ottawa Hospital - Civic Campus. He shared that the teams were professional but also human, they exuded confidence and helped him remain positive. He never gave up and used humour to get through the difficult days.

How has having a stroke changed your life?

Before having a stroke, Jim considered himself to be busy and spontaneous. After having a stroke Jim was not in a rush to return to his regular activities. He knew that he was not the same person that he was before, but he was not going to let it get him down. Jim now sees the world through a different lens and used the example of the commercial about recognizing a stroke. When he sees this commercial now, he knows what that experience is like and it reminds him to never take anything for granted.

Jim believes that, "You can make a challenge big or small. If you have a good attitude you can meet the challenge head on."

What do you feel you have accomplished through your stroke journey?

Jim has never been a quitter and always reminds himself that his situation could be worse. He feels that he has been very lucky and had great care throughout his journey. He always looks for the ray of light.

Jim's focus is his 21-year-old son who recently graduated from college. He has always instilled in him to be true to yourself and work hard and it is this advice that has helped Jim during his recovery process. Jim always wakes up with a smile on his face and keeps all his blessings in mind.

Is there anything that you would have done differently throughout your stroke recovery journey?

Jim wouldn't change a thing! He knew that he had to work with the system and needed to trust the process and have faith.

Now that you are a stroke survivor how are you living your life differently?

Before having a stroke, Jim did not have the best eating habits. After his stroke, he is eating better and is more aware of what he puts in his body. Jim has learned about nutrition through education from a Registered Dietician and is taking better care of himself overall.

What 3 things would you tell a person who just had a stroke?

- 1) "Don't be afraid, it will get better"
- 2) "Put your trust in the people on the stroke team"
- 3) "Attitude is everything! Don't give up!"

What is your one key message about your experience with stroke

"You can accomplish a lot of good even with limitations. Don't think because you had a stroke you can't contribute to society. I have learned to keep going and do my best."

Who are your informal supports?

Jim's girlfriend Cindy has been his rock and main supporter throughout his stroke journey. Cindy along with his son and Cindy's mother have been instrumental in helping Jim see that there is still a lot of life to be lived. Jim values his independence and his support system gave him the space to remain independent and ask for help when he needed it.

Did you join a support group? How did it help?

Jim is a member of a stroke survivor support group in Pembroke. The group meets once a month for two hours. Various speakers come in to provide education, stroke survivors have an opportunity to share their experiences and Jim finds it helpful to learn and hear from people who have had similar experiences. Jim has found the support group very helpful.

For Jim attitude is everything and remaining positive has helped Jim through his stroke journey. The words he lives by are...

"Wake up to a sunny day even if it is raining. You have been given a second chance, don't let it pass you by!"

