

INSPIRING HOPE

Francisco Paco Morera (43) - "I've been blessed with a treatable disease."

I was born with a bicuspid aortic valve but had absolutely no issues with it until my early 40's. Here is my story:

I lived a normal life and maintained an above average level of physical fitness with my military service in the Army. At age 40, I began having symptoms; something was wrong. Before I deployed to Iraq in 2010, I had mild chest pains while running. I took an exercise stress test and my results were normal.



I deployed overseas and did not have any immediate symptoms or problems. Fast forward 3 years later, I again started having chest pains while running, however, this time the pain was more severe. After several months and with much persistence from close friends and family, I went back to the Cardiologist for a checkup. This time, however, the Cardiologist scheduled me to have an echocardiogram which detected my first sign of abnormality. The test results showed that I was born with a heart defect (bicuspid aortic) which resulted in aortic stenosis, narrowing of the aortic heart valve. While I thought the issue was found, my Cardiologist was not convinced. A week later, I had a heart catheterization which showed that I had a 90% blockage in my left anterior descending (LAD) coronary artery, the dreaded "Widow Maker".

I was Immediately rushed to the OSU Ross Heart Hospital. After a battery of tests, the doctor's discovered one final heart abnormality. A CAT scan of my heart revealed a bulging in my aorta. I had the beginnings of an aortic aneurysm. I was faced with heart surgery at age 43. My life seemed to turn upside down in an instant. On September 7, 2013 I had open-heart surgery, received a new Medtronic mechanical valve, had coronary artery bypass surgery, and the aortic aneurysm was grafted.

I am back to living a normal life of running, working out, and enjoying the fullness of life. However, I realize my life has changed, I am still adjusting to being on Coumadin, and I can no longer do certain physical activities.

During my stay in the hospital, I had a very encouraging visit from Jeff Davidson and I have since joined and became a member of Mended Hearts of Central Ohio. I have enjoyed the support and the information presented during the monthly meetings and I volunteer and visit heart patients at the OSU Ross Heart Hospital. Going through this journey, I realize how blessed and fortunate I am and have a much better appreciation for maintaining a lifestyle that consists of healthy eating, exercise, and controlling stress.

If you've had a similar experience, or would just like to talk to Paco about living with heart disease, his contact information is listed below!

Mended Hearts of Central Ohio

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It is great to be alive – and to help others