

HEALTH NEWS

Recovering From Stroke: Survivors Experience “Their Own Personal Marathons”

(NAPSA)—In the past five years, Jeff Rizner, 45, of Libertyville, IL, has run more than 100 road races, including an ultramarathon, 10 full marathons and 17 half marathons. During that time, Rizner has also been recovering from a stroke.

In February 2001, at the age of 37, Rizner suffered a stroke that left him partially paralyzed. He had to relearn tasks he once took for granted—eating, walking, even bathing and dressing. Over a long and challenging recovery, he regained the ability to walk and discovered an untapped passion for running. Today,



Jeff Rizner

Rizner spends much of his time at Alexian Rehabilitation Hospital, encouraging stroke survivors to set goals and remain positive during their recovery.

“I remember the first time I stood up, the first time I tied my shoes, taking the first steps. It was a marathon going from that point to where I am today. I tell stroke survivors that they can each have their own personal marathon by accomplishing whatever it is that they have as goals in their lives,” Rizner said.

As part of his rehabilitation, Rizner participated in the Second Chances™ study, which was undertaken to gain insight into the challenges of surviving a stroke for both patients and their caregivers.

Preliminary study results, which were presented at a panel discussion in Chicago on April 29, 2008 by researchers from Northwestern University and the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago, found that stroke patients reported surprisingly high overall life satisfaction. In fact, 73 percent of the 184 stroke survivors who participated in the Second Chances study reported they were “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with the overall quality of their lives. Rizner is one

of those patients. He views his recovery as a second chance at life.

Dina Pagnotta, a stroke survivor from New York City who participated in the Second Chances panel discussion with Rizner and other stroke survivors, caregivers and stroke experts, reinforced the lessons of the study and focused on the empowerment many stroke survivors gain during their recovery.

“It is so important to get the word out about stroke and the possibility of recovery, because your life does not end when you have a stroke,” said Pagnotta, who has also discovered a passion for running, working with other stroke survivors and supporting awareness initiatives such as Second Chances since suffering a stroke.

There are nearly six million stroke survivors in the United States today, according to the American Heart Association, and all are at an increased risk of suffering another stroke. Recurrent stroke risk can be reduced by getting regular checkups for high blood pressure and cholesterol, eating a healthy diet, exercising regularly, avoiding smoking and excessive alcohol intake and working with a physician to choose the medication that best meets individual needs.

“Recovering from a stroke is a lifelong journey that affects every patient differently,” said Diane Mulligan, panel participant and Vice President, National Corporate Communications Development at National Stroke Association, which worked together with study sponsor Boehringer Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals, Inc. to communicate study findings. “By understanding how stroke affects survivors, we’re better able to direct resources and care where they are most needed. That’s why studies like Second Chances are important.”

To learn more about the Second Chances study and view a webcast of the recent Chicago panel discussion, visit www.SecondChancesStudy.com.