

**Project:** Biosense Webster Patient Speech

**Assignment:** Develop a fully scripted speech for Beverly Gurtis to address the Biosense Webster sales team at a national sales meeting.

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*[ASSUMPTION: Dr. Pollack will introduce Beverly.]*

[AD LIB INTRO BASED ON DR. POLLACK'S INTRO]

When it comes to ideas making a difference, I've got some story to tell! You see, not only did ablation change MY life, it literally saved my SON's life. And it is such a privilege to actually be face to face with you to let you know just how wonderful you all are.

Before I get into my story, I want to explain that I am not medically knowledgeable any more than the normal lay person. When I first heard about ablation, I didn't know a catheter from a candy wrapper. Any medical terms I might use — and they are few — are just words I have heard repeated often enough that they're now part of my vocabulary... but not necessarily my understanding.

For most of my life, I've lived in the Central Florida area. For the past 25 years, I've worked at Florida Hospital in Orlando, first setting up a play therapy program on Peds, then setting up and working with a senior program. So I've gone from Pediatrics to Geriatrics, and I'm here to tell you there are many similarities!

I was married for 33 years to my husband Nils, who was an architect. He had studied and worked with Frank Lloyd Wright. As you can imagine, my life with him was interesting to say the least. We had 5 children, 3 boys and 2 girls, and had no major health problems that we knew of until my husband developed lung cancer, which finally took his life in 1988.

Starting in my late 20s, I would have occasional bouts with an irregular, extremely rapid heartbeat. It was diagnosed as PAT and I was told not to worry, the attacks were not life threatening, a lot of people had them and I should just let them run their course. And so, tachycardia became a way of life for me. Sometimes, if the episode lasted for an hour or

more, I would find I was quite worn out by it and felt as if I'd just run a marathon. Over time, these episodes became more frequent, and lasted longer and longer.

I learned that I could usually stop them by pushing on my carotid artery, a practice that was strongly discouraged by my doctors. But it worked quickly and was easy to do. Interestingly enough, I could never predict the onset of an episode. It didn't seem to be in any way related to stress, exercise, excitement or fear; it would just happen when I least expected it.

On the rare occasion when I could not stop the arrhythmia, I had also learned that by putting my face in ice water and holding my breath, it would generally stop the problem. Divers' syndrome I believe they call it. Well, let me tell you there is no way you can discretely ask for a pan of ice cubes and water and then plunge your face into it without becoming the center of attention. My children knew just which bowl to fill and how high the water should be for easy submersion. However, when it happened in public or at a party, it was another story. One time we were at a rather formal dinner and I had to retreat into the hotel kitchen for help. I'm sure those busboys thought I had imbibed way over my limit. And what's more, it ruins your make-up! For years I stopped wearing mascara completely!

Since there was nothing to be done about it, and there was no real death threat connected with these episodes, we all learned to deal with the incidents and then forget them.

Five years after my husband died, I remarried. Joe Gurtis was a friend of my husband's. They had worked together founding a prison ministry that is now all over the country and in England, Africa and Australia, so I knew he was a god man. As I told you, my first husband was an architect; Joe was an insurance executive. When asked to describe my husbands, I say Nils was like this... and Joe is like this...!

Joe's wife had died 7 years before, leaving him with 8 children. That's right: I had 5 children and he had 8, giving us a total of 13 children, their various spouses and as of last count, 30 grandchildren. You know how they say you should work crossword puzzles or play bridge to keep your mind active? I tell Joe if we can name all the grandchildren each day we should be okay!

But back to the subject of arterial fibrillation... In the summer and fall of 2002, I began having much more severe attacks that could not be easily stopped, even with the ice water

trick. They were happening every other day. My heart would beat so fast I'd get dizzy, I'd feel completely disconnected from what was happening, like I was in a gray fog. I just couldn't function. I ended up in the emergency room on several occasions, wore many different monitors, tried all kinds of medical interventions and saw three different cardiologists.

On one of my emergency room visits, my knee was hurting as well as my heart racing up a storm. When I asked the doctor about my knee, she said she was going to save my life first and then worry about my knee. By this time, I was almost afraid to go any place, not knowing if I would be able to drive home. Several times, I had to have someone call my husband to pick me up in Orlando — about a 100-mile round trip — and then we had to work out getting my car home. I know in California that's not a very long commute, but for us, well, it created a lot of problems.

I had heard about ablation from several sources, and when I asked the first two doctors about it they would just prescribe a different medicine. One said he had done one or two ablations and felt it was a dangerous procedure. Well, I certainly wasn't going to let him practice this procedure for a third time on me!

I finally found a young female cardiologist who really heard what I was saying. Her first statement was that I was probably a good candidate for ablation, and how successful and safe it was. She put me in touch with Dr. Scott Pollack, an electrophysiologist who truly was my knight in shining armor. But instead of a sword, he used the instruments developed at Biosense Webster. The treatment required only an overnight stay, was relatively pain-free and extremely successful.

That was four years ago. I'm living proof of how Biosense Webster ideas make a difference. Before ablation, my life was ruled by fear. I couldn't do much of anything. We are very fortunate to live on the beach, but I was afraid to go near the water. I was afraid to drive anywhere by myself, in case I couldn't drive myself back home. It's a terrible way to live, in fact it's not really living at all.

Now, four years later, I have not had a single episode. I can do anything I want to, even things I never could have done before. Just as an example, my granddaughter was recently showing me some property in the mountains. I was able to cover the whole ten acres up and down. Before, I never could have done that. Heck, I'm even wearing make-up again!

I cannot possibly express the full extent of my gratitude to you for developing this procedure. Pardon the pun, but I thank you with all my heart!

This is not the end of my talk. Your ideas have also made a difference in my son's life. As Paul Harvey says, here is the rest of my story.

We are going back 28 years to 1977. One afternoon, I was called by the coach to pick up my youngest son, David. He was 10 years old at the time, and playing basketball in a little league. The coach said he had to take David out of the game because his heart was beating so fast and it didn't stop with some time on the sidelines. My first thought was he was probably hungry, my second thought was uh-oh, he caught this from me.

David was quite upset at not being allowed to finish the game because he told me he was the "high point man" for their team. He had made two baskets! When I asked him the score, he proudly said 6 to 0, and he had made 4 points. I said maybe the other boy who had made the other basket might help. David said, "No, he was a kid from the other team who got mixed up and shot at our basket. But it was good because we got the points!" Such is life in the little leagues!

Well, we saw a pediatric cardiologist who immediately diagnosed David's problem as WPW — Wolff-Parkinson-White Syndrome. We were told he would probably outgrow it, and David was even given permission to play football or any other competitive sport. So now there were two of us. We took it all in stride. Nothing to worry about.

Well, he didn't outgrow it, but having learned all of my tricks for getting rid of the problem, David continued life as normal. He grew up, got married and had a precious little boy named Luke and a darling little girl, Gracie. However, as he grew older, his attacks became more frequent, and more often than not he had to use the ice water treatments to get relief. But life was good and we assumed there was nothing to worry about.

However, one of my emergency room visits was in our small hospital in New Smyrna Beach. My husband Joe had called my son, Kevin, who lives there, and they were sitting in the waiting room while some tests were being run on me. A friend of Kevin's, Dr. Collado, a local cardiologist, spotted him in the waiting room and, learning of my condition, offered to check on me. Just as part of the conversation, Kevin mentioned that he had a brother who

also had a problem with a rapid heartbeat and had been diagnosed as a child with WPW. Dr. Collado asked a few more questions and said Kevin should have his brother see a cardiologist immediately. Because of a new insurance policy, David did not get to a doctor immediately. In the meantime I was scheduled to have my ablation.

Unfortunately, David's insurance wouldn't allow him to see Dr. Pollack, but he did see another electrophysiologist. After all, David knew this was affecting his life. As a musician — he plays guitar — he was getting to the point where he often had to back out of a gig. But we just assumed it was like mine — non-life threatening. However, when that doctor looked at David's EKG he told us, "I don't know whether to laugh or cry! This is the craziest thing I have ever seen!" He couldn't believe David had not had a major medical problem.

That doctor immediately scheduled David for an ablation. Because the results of my ablation had been so positive, David — and more importantly, his wife — felt no fear or apprehension. They were just grateful to have the possibility of a cure so close at hand.

David's results were just as positive as mine; he hasn't had a single episode in the year since his ablation and is as healthy as any other 36-year-old can be. Remember, we're talking about a man who had two children — a 3 year-old and a 4 month-old — when he was diagnosed. Now I thought at this point I understood what catheters were all about, but I gotta wonder since they had a third child — little Jillian — born exactly nine months after his surgery!

One of the things I want to really emphasize is that all that time I was having my episodes, there wasn't anything anybody could tell me to do. Then somebody had a great idea that allowed Dr. Pollack to see where he was going inside my heart, to see what the electrical activity looked like, and to go to the exact right spot to treat the arrhythmia. Talk about ideas making a difference! Your innovations have truly made a difference in my life, in my son's life, and in the lives of our entire family, and I cannot thank you enough!

As I understand it, the technology has only been around for about 10 years. But even five years ago, one cardiologist described it as a very dangerous procedure, while another was saying how safe and effective it was. That really drove home for me the importance of getting the word out about how successful ablation surgery can be for people like me and my son and countless others with arrhythmia. So I commend you on your new marketing

strategy, I wish you much success, and if there is anything I can do to help, you know where to find me!