

Mayo Clinic 150th Collection of Stories

O23 Caroline's Courage after Stroke

Intro: Who do you picture when you think of a stroke victim? The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says most people who have strokes are over the age of 64, but they can strike at any age. A little girl named Caroline Simmons knows that all too well. She was just 10 years old when she was rushed to Mayo Clinic for emergency treatment of a massive brain hemorrhage.

Video

Audio

TRT 2:42 Kristi Simmons Caroline's mom	"I remember Caroline getting up and saying, 'Mom, I know it's going to be a great day.'"
Voice of Vivien Williams	But on the bus ride to school, 4 th grader, Caroline Simmons' great day turned into a devastating one.
Caroline Simmons Stroke survivor	"I started to have a massive headache. It was like a migraine, but worse."
Voice of Vivien Williams	Caroline was having a stroke. Her brain was hemorrhaging. An ambulance rushed her to Mayo Clinic.
Caroline Simmons Stroke survivor	"I lost my ability to move along the right side of my body, and I couldn't talk because my vocal cords were paralyzed."
Sam Simmons Caroline's father	"It was really frightening. You never expect anything like that's going to happen to your 10-year-old daughter."
Voice of Vivien Williams	A multidisciplinary team of specialized experts at Mayo Clinic launched into action. They performed an angiogram that revealed an abnormal tangle of vessels called an arteriovenous malformation or, AVM, in her brain.
Nicholas Wetjen, M.D. Mayo Clinic pediatric neurosurgeon	"These can rupture, break and cause a hemorrhage."
Voice of Vivien Williams	Mayo Clinic pediatric neurosurgeon Nicholas Wetjen says the bleeding can then clot, further increasing pressure in the brain.

Nicholas Wetjen, M.D. Mayo Clinic pediatric neurosurgeon	"The majority is left with some type of deficit, although in children as opposed to adults, they tend to recover quite a bit faster."
Voice of Vivien Williams	Caroline's surgery involved removing the clot along with the tangle of vessels that doctors suspect was there since birth.
Sam Simmons	"Seeing her get rolled out of the room after surgery was kind of a shocker too."
Kristi Simmons	"That was hard. That was really hard."
Voice of Vivien Williams	But Caroline, who is now 24 years old and a college graduate, made it through a critical event from which one-fourth don't recover.
Caroline Simmons	"I tried so hard to believe I wasn't going to die."
	Still, she remembers the ordeal.
Caroline Simmons	"I'm glad I survived that day. If I hadn't held on, that awful stroke would have killed me. And I would have never met such wonderful friends."
Voice of Vivien Williams	Now, Caroline's appreciation of life is obvious in all she does, even at work in the kitchen.
Caroline Simmons	"Chocolate chip cookies."
Voice of Vivien Williams	And even though the stroke left a permanent mark,
Caroline Simmons	"Everything moves a bit slower on my right side than my left side."
Voice of Vivien Williams	Caroline's courage is an inspiration to many. An example of strength, optimism and love.

Anchor tag:

A hemorrhagic stroke, or one in which there is a bleed in your brain, is less common than an ischemic stroke, which happens when a blood clot blocks off blood supply to the brain. Since Caroline got exactly the care she needed and the tangle of abnormal vessels was removed, doctors say her outlook is very good for a long and healthy life.

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