

A shattered leg, a blood sample and a discovery that may have saved a family

A snowmobile accident that nearly cost one Iowa farmer his leg led to a discovery that may have saved his entire family. His story is one example of a growing shift in medicine at Mayo Clinic - finding disease before symptoms appear, when there is still time to change the outcome.	ANCHOR INTRO
On a quiet afternoon at Mayo Clinic, Chad Rockow walks down a hallway he now knows by heart. Appointments with medical specialists have become a regular part of his life. His Mayo Clinic journey traces back nearly 13 years, to a cold December night and a devastating snowmobile accident.	NARRATOR
"My leg hit the four-by-four post and made a T, and my heel touched the back of my calf."	CHAD ROCKOW Mayo Clinic patient
The crash shattered his leg. His recovery became a blur of surgeries and setbacks measured in months of pain. But during his care at Mayo Clinic, a small request was made: would he donate a blood sample to help future medical research?	NARRATOR
"Mayo Biobank was, hey, would you donate your tissue, your flesh, blood samples, whatever, to medical research? Sure. Take my stuff. I don't care."	CHAD ROCKOW Mayo Clinic patient
Eventually, he recovered and returned to the farming life he loved.	NARRATOR

"Corn. Soybeans. Hogs."	CHAD ROCKOW Mayo Clinic patient
The biobank sample became a distant memory. ...Until 13 years later in 2025, when a Mayo Clinic genetic counselor called.	NARRATOR
"Hey, we feel you have a SDHD rare genetic mutation of the endocrine cells."	CHAD ROCKOW Mayo Clinic patient
"She kind of explained the mutation, the disease, the characteristics of it, the tumors, the high blood pressures, the anxieties."	CHAD ROCKOW Mayo Clinic patient
Suddenly, decades of family history began to make sense.	NARRATOR
"I'm not surprised at anything you just told me, because everything that you are describing is my dad from 40 years ago."	CHAD ROCKOW Mayo Clinic patient
Decades earlier, his father had surgery to remove tumors from his neck. Other relatives had faced similar complications. Genetic testing soon confirmed Chad, his father, his brother and his sister all carried the mutation. Then came the scans.	NARRATOR
"My sister was the first one to have her MRI, and she found two tumors on the carotid artery, one on both sides."	CHAD ROCKOW Mayo Clinic patient
Doctors found multiple tumors in all four family members. Chad recently had surgery to	NARRATOR

remove a golf-ball-sized tumor wrapped around his carotid artery.	
"My brother's piece of the puzzle is a little bit more serious, and potentially is showing some cancer characteristics."	CHAD ROCKOW Mayo Clinic patient
The Mayo Clinic Biobank was created in 2009 to help researchers uncover the roots of disease. More than 52,000 volunteers like Chad contributed blood samples, health information and access to their medical records. Dr. Janet Olson helped build the biobank.	NARRATOR
"It's been used for more than 500 studies to date..."	DR. JANET OLSON
When those first samples were collected, the technology to identify specific mutations simply didn't exist.	NARRATOR
"Never would have dreamed this was possible at that time to do the kind of research that we can do now."	JANET OLSON, Ph.D. EPIDEMIOLOGY Mayo Clinic
One of the Biobank's biggest efforts focused on the DNA contained in those blood samples. Researchers looked for inherited changes linked to serious but medically actionable conditions. Chad was one of nearly 1,000 participants offered potentially life-changing results.	NARRATOR
"I really do think Mayo Clinic Biobank is a gold mine."	JANET OLSON, Ph.D. EPIDEMIOLOGY Mayo Clinic
"It took years ... to recruit the patients, to get the samples, to extract the DNA, to	JANET OLSON, Ph.D. EPIDEMIOLOGY

store the samples in the freezers, and then make them available to researchers."	Mayo Clinic
"We're getting back those gold nuggets, and Chad's story is a great example of one of those gold nuggets of how we actually made a direct impact on a patient's life."	JANET OLSON, Ph.D. EPIDEMIOLOGY Mayo Clinic
"Not only did they save my life, but it's going to save my sister's life, my brother's life, enhance dads..."	CHAD ROCKOW Mayo Clinic patient
For Chad, the mutation may always be part of his family's story. But he hopes it no longer defines its future. For the first time in generations, his family can see it coming. For the Mayo Clinic News Network, I'm Susan Murphy.	NARRATOR