

A MOTHER'S HEART

THE BEST OF TIMES AND THE WORST OF TIMES FOR THIS NEW MOM

By Andrew Shanley



Jamie and Jax Delaney

JAMIE DELANEY OF PITTSFIELD WAS IN THE EARLY STAGES OF LABOR AT NORTH ADAMS REGIONAL HOSPITAL LAST JULY WHEN SHE STARTED HAVING INTENSE CHEST PAINS.

Her obstetrical team decided to deliver her baby by Cesarean section, and Jax Delaney was born a healthy boy. But his mom's ordeal was far from over.

Once the baby was delivered, Jamie received an echocardiogram, which showed a pooling of blood around her heart. Her aorta had ruptured. She was rushed by helicopter to Baystate Medical Center in Springfield and quickly underwent a series of CAT scans.

A team of doctors, led by Dr. Daniel Engelman, a cardiac surgeon at Baystate Medical Center, gathered at her bedside with the verdict. "They told me they had to bring me to surgery right away," Jamie recalls. "It was clear things were pretty serious and that I might not survive. It was a difficult moment. My family hadn't even arrived yet, but there was no time to wait."

Jamie's sister arrived at the hospital shortly after. "I was able to tell her that I loved her, and to ask her to tell my family that I loved them and my little baby boy," says Jamie.

According to Engelman, most patients with a ruptured aorta like Jamie's die within an hour. "But childbirth is known to cause your blood to clot very well to prevent post-childbirth hemorrhage," he says. "In Jamie's case it held together just long enough to get her to the operating room."

She was in surgery for nine hours, during which time the cardiac team put her on a bypass pump, which did the work of her heart and lungs. Her body temperature was cooled to 15 degrees Celsius. Her heart was stopped. The surgeons knew they were under the clock. But by the end, they were able to successfully repair the damage.

Jamie spent about a week recovering on the hospital's cardiac unit. "The care I received was phenomenal," she says. "I felt like they went above and beyond for me. Every time there was an issue, a team of doctors was there at my bedside. I was given a private room to make room for a crib so Jax could be with me. They had a maternity nurse come regularly, and a lactation consultant. They just wanted to make it as easy as possible for me."

Jamie is appreciative of the fact that she was quickly transferred to Baystate Medical Center and its Baystate Heart & Vascular Program when crisis struck. Baystate Medical Center is one of the Nation's 100 Top Hospitals® for cardiovascular care.

Since she was recovering from two surgeries—her Cesarean section and major heart surgery—it's been a slow process to regain her strength, but Jamie is expected to have a full return to the life she lived before baby Jax was born. She will, however, have one lasting reminder of all she endured; her son was born with a small birthmark on his foot, and it's in the shape of a heart.

For information about the Baystate Heart & Vascular Program, visit baystatehealth.org/heart.



Dr. Daniel Engelman

ALMOST ALL PATIENTS WITH A RUPTURED AORTA LIKE JAMIE'S DIE WITHIN AN HOUR.

