



Heed your heart: Ignoring symptoms of heart attack is gambling with your life

Claire Brown, RN, Manager, Cardiovascular Network Development; Heart Institute at AtlantiCare Regional Medical Center

When it comes to symptoms of a heart attack, most of us wait until the last second before seeking treatment. For your heart's sake, refrain from gambling on your life. Dial 911 for symptoms of a heart attack.

February is American Heart Month. Women especially tend to ignore warning signs of heart attack or early heart disease. Many patients suffer extensive heart damage, or die from a heart attack we could have treated. As a nurse and educator, I am deeply saddened when patients and family members ignore signs of a heart attack. AtlantiCare Regional Medical Center's experienced physicians and staff use the most advanced technology to diagnose and treat heart attacks. Time is muscle when it comes to the heart. Those who wait often have extensive heart damage. What is most devastating to families, and the care team, is when someone who could have lived, ignores symptoms or delays seeking treatment and dies of a heart attack."

Most heart attacks start slowly – not like the dramatic ones we see on television or movies in which a person falls to the ground clutching her chest. Dial 911 immediately if you or a loved one experience signs or symptoms. Refrain from driving yourself or a loved one to the hospital. Dialing 911 ensures the appropriate responders – including paramedics with advanced life support training – respond and get your or your loved one to the right hospital.

Symptoms include chest discomfort that lasts more than a few minutes or goes away and comes back. It might feel like pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain. Experiencing extreme fatigue; shortness of breath; discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, or jaw; a feeling of indigestion or upset stomach are all symptoms. Symptoms can also include breaking into a cold sweat and being nauseous or lightheaded. Many patients who experienced heart attack also said they just didn't feel right.

The most common heart attack symptom is chest pain or discomfort. Women are more likely than men to experience shortness of breath, nausea/vomiting, and back or jaw pain.

Learn the signs. Even if you're not sure it's a heart attack, dial 911 for any of these symptoms. The emergency care team would rather tell you it's not a heart attack than inform your family the team could have saved you if you'd gotten to the hospital.

The Heart Institute at AtlantiCare Regional

Medical Center is the region's only full-service cardiac surgery program. The Society of Chest Pain Centers (SCPC) has accredited AtlantiCare Regional Medical Center's (ARMC) Mainland Campus in Pomona – where the ARMC Heart Institute is based - and ARMC City Campus in Atlantic City as full Cycle II Chest Pain centers. ARMC Mainland Campus also holds accreditation in percutaneous coronary intervention (PCI), also known as angioplasty, because it can perform these as scheduled or emergency procedures 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

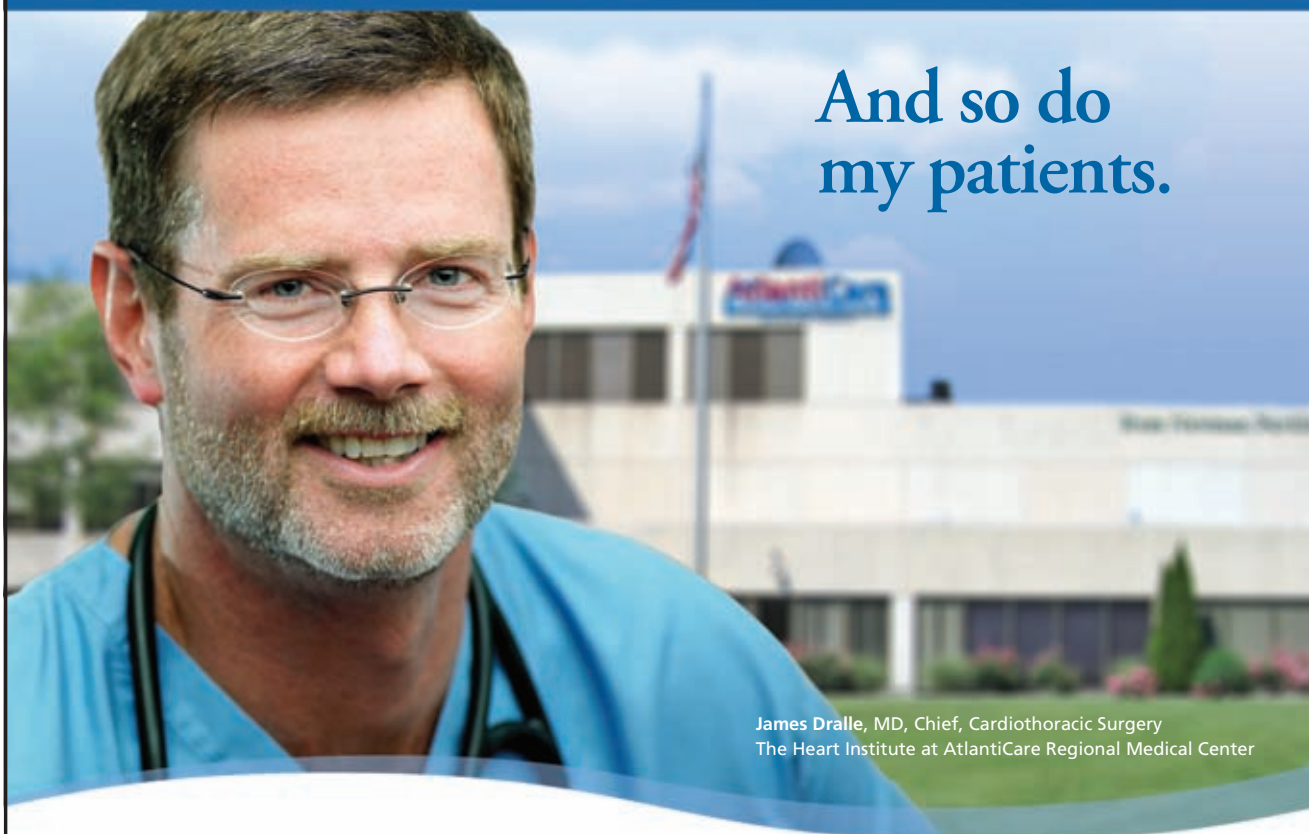
ARMC's Chest Pain Centers' protocol-driven and

systematic approach to patient management allows nurses, physicians and other clinical staff to reduce time to treatment during the critical early stages of a heart attack, when treatments are most effective, and to better monitor patients when it is not clear whether they are having a heart issue.

For chest pain and other heart attack symptoms, dial 911. For more information about the Heart Institute at AtlantiCare Regional Medical Center, AtlantiCare's free Matters of the Heart seminars and screenings or other AtlantiCare programs and services, call the AtlantiCare Access Center at 1-888-569-1000 or visit www.atlanticare.org.

The President recognizes us for quality excellence.

And so do my patients.



James Dralle, MD, Chief, Cardiothoracic Surgery
The Heart Institute at AtlantiCare Regional Medical Center

Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award Recipient

Local cardiac surgery patients don't have to go far to put their hearts in good hands. The most recent state report* identifies AtlantiCare Regional Medical Center as the only hospital in the region certified in heart surgery with one of the lowest mortality rates. Great results for our patients—that's one reason we earned the Baldrige Award...and our patients' heartfelt trust, the greatest reward of all.

*"Cardiac Surgery in New Jersey 2007", a healthcare quality assessment, released by the state Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS).

"The road to greatness in America has been, and always will be, traveled by those who embrace change and work hard every day to be the best. The organizations we honor today with the Baldrige National Quality Award exemplify that spirit."

— Barack Obama,
44th President of
the United States



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