

Health News From Cleveland County HealthCare System

# TEAM KNEW WHAT TO DO

*Coordinated emergency care helped mom keep her arm*

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*On April 2, 2009, Amanda McBrayer was driving home with her children when her car ran off the road and hit a tree. The children weren't hurt and McBrayer thought she had a broken arm.*

*"I thought my arm was broken, but when I reached to cradle it, it wasn't there," she said, retelling the horrific few minutes after the crash. "I saw it lying on the ground."*



Photo by Paula Vess

*Amanda McBrayer and her husband Brad returned to CRMC a year after the accident to thank staff who helped her. Left-to-right are: Brad McBrayer, Amanda McBrayer, Anna Burgess, RN, Ashley Jones, RN and Ivan Sanchez, MD*

Recently, McBrayer returned to Cleveland Regional Medical Center (CRMC) to participate in a first-time event, a trauma conference held by the Metrolina Advisory Council, a regional group that works to promote and improve a coordinated trauma system in this region. Emergency services personnel and hospital staff from five counties participated in the conference through an interactive video broadcast.

McBrayer's case was being presented as an example of how important a coordinated trauma system is to a community. Surgeons at Carolinas Medical Center (CMC) were able to reattach McBrayer's arm because of the combined efforts of Cleveland County Emergency Services' emergency medical technicians and the staff at CRMC, which is a Level III Trauma Center.

After the conference, McBrayer returned to the Emergency Department to say thank you to some of the staff who cared for her the day of the accident.

"When I opened my eyes there were lots of lights and all this stuff around me," she said. "One of the nurses stood close to my ear explaining everything that was going on. She kept me calm."

Ashley Jones, RN, was one of the nurses who cared for McBrayer. "We know what we each need to do when a trauma arrives," Jones said. "We know our role is to get them where they need to be as soon as possible."

Jones was happy to see McBrayer. "It's nice to know that people appreciate what we do and that we make a

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Ivan Sanchez, MD

significant impact on people's lives," she said.

The emergency physician on duty that day vividly remembers McBrayer and her injury.

"It was a very difficult situation," said Ivan Sanchez, MD. "The wound by itself was quite shocking, but everyone kept their cool. Since we are a Level III trauma center, our staff is trained to handle situations like this and everyone knew exactly what to do."

Dr. Sanchez and the trauma team quickly examined McBrayer and her arm and determined that she had a very good chance of having the limb re-attached. Fortunately and somewhat surprisingly, McBrayer didn't have any other serious injuries.

"With an amputation like this, if the limb is in good condition it can be viable for about six hours," Dr. Sanchez said. "When she arrived it had only been an hour since the accident and the paramedics did a good

job of wrapping the arm and putting it on ice. We knew there was a good chance she could have it re-attached. We contacted Carolinas Medical Center (CMC) to alert them we were sending her."

While other members of the trauma team cared for McBrayer, Anna Burgess, RN, was taking care of the arm, getting it ready for transport. Surgical reattachment of a body part that has been completely cut from the body is called replantation. According to the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons, the goal of replantation surgery is to give the patient back as much use of the injured area as possible. The surgery is long and the healing and rehabilitation process can take years. A surgeon usually recommends the surgery only when the replanted part is expected to work at least as well as a prosthesis. Because of the efforts



*McBrayer demonstrates the motion she has regained in her wrist and fingers.*

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- Ashley Jones, RN

of the emergency medical technicians at the accident scene and the trauma team at CRMC, McBrayer's arm was still viable when she arrived at CMC. A team of orthopaedic surgeons, vascular surgeons and others performed the replantation surgery. The initial surgery took about eight hours and she needed six additional surgeries before that part of the process was complete. When McBrayer left the

hospital, she went to a short-term rehabilitation facility.

"That was the hardest part for the kids," she said. "They were very mature about the accident and what happened with my arm. It was more about momma not being at home because I was gone about 40 days."

Almost two years later, McBrayer has made significant progress but says it is still a "one day at a time process."

She began regaining feeling after about a year and now can feel some sensation, including hot and cold. She can also bend her arm at the elbow and wrist, and is beginning to move her fingers. Her rehabilitation isn't over, but she will continue to work until she regains as much movement and sensation as possible.

"If it hadn't been for what the staff did here (at CRMC) I don't think my health would have been as good," McBrayer said.



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