Oneida Health

Breathing Life into Second Chances

Oneida, NY – When Mary Hudgins was diagnosed with sarcoidosis disease of the lung, she never imagined she would one day find herself in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) at Upstate Hospital in a medically induced coma. Four months ago, this became Mary's reality.

By all accounts, Mary was a healthy 69-year-old who spent her days with her husband of 49 years enjoying their 4 grown-children and 15 grandchildren. She walked 10 miles four days a week in her quiet north Syracuse neighborhood and was devoted to her faith. Mary was living her best life.

It wasn't until Mary began to struggle to breath one day that her life quickly changed. With the quick response of her nieces, Mary was rushed by ambulance to Upstate Hospital. Due to her poor condition at the time, doctors were forced to put her in a medically induced coma to stabilize her. Unfortunately for Mary, the worse was still to come. "Doctors told my husband there was a chance I wasn't going to make it and if I did, I'd be in rehab on a ventilator for the rest of my life," said Mary. "It was as scared as I have ever felt. But I knew at that time I had my husband and God by my side."

After 6-weeks in the ICU, Mary was stabilized and transferred to a ventilator unit at the Oneida Health Rehabilitation and Extended Care in Oneida. It was most likely where Mary would spend the rest of her days living on a ventilator. "Being on a ventilator is an awful experience," said Mary. "It was like being a prisoner. I was extremely short of breath, too weak to walk, stand, talk or even write a letter to one of my lovely grandchildren. I could hardly scribble. Being bedridden, I was in of need total care."

Fortunately for Mary, she now had access to a highly trained and experienced team of doctors, respiratory therapist, nursing, and rehabilitation therapy professionals at Oneida Health who along with herself, were determined to get her home.

Over the course of the next 9 weeks, Mary worked with the Oneida Health medical staff every day to improve her condition. "It was not easy," said Mary. "I pushed hard and they pushed harder. It was only with the love for my husband and family, the will of God, and the angels he sent me from Oneida Health that I was able to build my strength a little each day." After 42 days of being dependent on a ventilator, Mary was again able to breath on her own. Twenty-three days later, Mary was packing her bag to return home.

"I can't say enough about the amazing care I received from the medical experts at Oneida Health and Upstate," said Mary. "Without them I would still be laying in that bed, struggling to breath or maybe I wouldn't be here. They gave me a second chance at life. I can't thank them and God enough for giving me the strength to survive."

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When Mary was asked what she planned to do first upon returning home, she responded, "I'm going to celebrate with my family at Red Lobster," two of her favorite things. "And as soon as I can, I'm going to start walking 10 miles, again. Working each day to get stronger with the inspiration of the great doctors and nurses who gave me the strength to be able to return home to my family. Thanks for all you do, for all the people, all the time, every day, God bless."

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About Oneida Health

Oneida Health serves an area comprised of approximately 29 communities in Madison and western Oneida counties with a population of approximately 100,000. Operated by Oneida Health Systems, Inc, a New York State not-for-profit corporation, the organization includes a 101-bed acute care hospital, emergency department, state of the art surgery center, 160-bed extended-care and short-term rehab facility, primary care offices, internal medicine, comprehensive lab services, home medical equipment, comprehensive imaging services, outpatient therapy, and care specialties in: oncology, cardiology, neurology, podiatry, vascular, sleep, OB/GYN, orthopedics, wound care, GI, pulmonary, and ENT. To learn more about Oneida Health, visit www.oneidahealth.org.