

Patient: Angie Lee

Diagnosis: Stroke

Referred to: Rehabilitation Center at Santa Clara Valley Medical Center

Care Team: Dr. Thao Duong, MD
Chief, Brain Injury & Stroke Unit

Sherylou Tapaya Dea, RN
Brain Injury & Stroke Unit

Amy Millan,
Physical Therapist
Brain Injury & Stroke Unit



Stroke Victim's Recovery Aided Every Step of the Way

Until she suffered a serious stroke, Angie Lee had no idea that she had high blood pressure. The stroke happened while she was in the Bay Area visiting her family from her home in Chicago. At first, Angie was treated at another hospital. Later she was admitted to Santa Clara Valley Medical Center's (SCVMC) Rehabilitation Center, the largest stroke rehab center on the West Coast. The Center has won several national awards including those for getting patients safely and successfully discharged from the hospital and back to their homes, and for being sensitive to people of all cultures.

Once admitted, Angie was immediately put in the care of a rehab team that included doctors, nurses, physical, speech, and occupational therapists, as well as a social worker, psychologist, and case manager. The teams at SCVMC work together and talk with each other many times during the week. Angie's team was up to date about Angie's condition and, with Angie, put together a care plan so Angie could reach her recovery goals. The ongoing attention and support that Angie received is exactly how the team works with all patients.

"There is great expertise here," says Dr. Thao Duong, Chief of the Brain Injury & Stroke Unit. "The physicians are all brain injury medicine board certified, and our therapists and nurses have received training to be certified in brain injury care. We train Stanford University Medical Center rehab residents, which helps us keep up with the latest technologies available to patients."

Angie is very thankful for everything the team brings to her recovery. "At first I was scared because I didn't know what to expect from rehab, but the staff and everyone on my team was very welcoming. I felt comfortable as soon as I met them."

Angie's stroke occurred on the right side of her brain, which caused weakness on the left side of her body. She was unable to walk, to dress, or to handle any of her personal care.

"When Angie arrived she was not aware of her left side and could not move her left arm or leg," says Amy Millan, the physical therapist on Angie's care team.

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Dr. Thao Duong, MD, Chief of the Brain Injury & Stroke Unit



The care team worked with Angie for the three weeks she was in the hospital. She had therapy for three hours every day. Therapists focused on helping strengthen her left side and involved her family in the daily therapy routine. Angie made good progress. She went from being able to do about 50 percent of the work of getting out of bed and into a wheelchair, to the point where she is now standing up and walking with support.

Angie is currently an outpatient at SCVMC. She sometimes uses Ekso Bionics equipment, a wearable exoskeleton suit that helps to retrain the brain on movement, and sometimes Angie is able to walk without the Ekso by using a cane.

“We get families to work hands-on with the patient as soon as possible, to the degree that they are able and that is safe for the patient,” says Millan. “We do a lot of patient and caregiver education. We ask families to come to treatment sessions and to understand the exercises that are being taught to the patient. Before the patient leaves the hospital to go home, the family goes through a training program of how to care for the patient in a way that will improve recovery.”

In Angie’s case, the family learned to help Angie pay attention to her left side. The team had family members, hold her left hand, sit and talk to her from her left side, and continually remind her of the fact that she had a left side.”

The support that Angie received from family and friends, combined with the expertise and encouragement from the care team has kept Angie moving forward on the road to recovery.

“One of my doctors told me, ‘just never give up,’” Angie tearfully recalls. “That’s a mantra that has gone through my head every day, because every day I get a little better.”

The doctors and entire care team agree that Angie should improve as her recovery continues over the next few years.

Angie is pleased that the care team is there to track her progress, even now as an outpatient. “I have been able to see the same doctor that I met with when I first came here, and she was here during my entire stay. I have seen her again since my discharge and it’s nice to have her and the entire care team see my progress and assure me that, yes, with continued therapy, I am getting better.”

[Learn more about our Rehabilitation Center programs, call 408.885.2032.](#)

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