



Friend | New Mom | Partner | Survivor

"My wife Sana was misdiagnosed with a seizure disorder as a child in Pakistan. As she took more and more medicine, she continued to get worse. It took an emergency and the doctors at NorthShore to diagnose the real problem and save her life. Sana thought she was dying and doesn't remember much. I was so scared my baby daughter Sania and I were going to lose her. At the Evanston Hospital Emergency Department, they had to shock her heart seven times. Sana was in the Intensive Care Unit for 15 days. We're confident now that she's in good hands. I want to thank all the doctors and nurses who helped in her care. They're like angels!"

Mohammad Alam
with wife Sana and daughter Sania

Advanced Cardiovascular Services

Long QT syndrome is a rare genetic condition that is commonly misdiagnosed and causes life-threatening irregular heartbeats or arrhythmias. Thankfully, 25-year-old Sana Syed's condition was correctly diagnosed by a team of NorthShore physicians. They quickly came together and connected with a national expert to save her life.

Syed's husband brought her to NorthShore Evanston Hospital fearing the worst. Emergency Department physicians immediately recognized a very abnormal EKG and called in NorthShore cardiologist Westby Fisher, MD, an expert in cardiac electrophysiology. NorthShore's integrated cardiovascular team offers individualized treatment programs to guide patients like Syed through the diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation of complex heart conditions and diseases.



From left: Dr. Westby Fisher, Dr. Jose Nazari and Dr. Alex Ro

Suspecting long QT syndrome was the cause of Syed's arrhythmia, Dr. Fisher called his colleague at Mayo Clinic—cardiologist Michael Ackerman, MD, PhD—one of the premier specialists in this rare condition. The consultation was part of NorthShore's affiliation with the Mayo Clinic Care Network.

"I sent him the EKG, and he called me right back and confirmed that her condition was most likely long QT type II syndrome," said Dr. Fisher. "Dr. Ackerman was very helpful, particularly in establishing a long-term care plan for Ms. Syed."



Dr. Michael Ackerman

"Phenomenal Patient Care"

Cardiology Division Head Jorge Saucedo, MD, joined NorthShore this year and is already building on the team's strengths to further advance clinical and research initiatives.

"The quality of the cardiologists in the Division is second to none," said Dr. Saucedo, the Allstate Foundation/Judson B. Branch Chair of Cardiology. "They're excellent clinicians providing phenomenal patient care."



Dr. Jorge Saucedo

Dr. Saucedo is leading a growing team of cardiologists and exploring further collaboration with partners at Mayo Clinic. This includes alliances in clinical trials to provide patients the latest access to advanced, individualized medicine.

Syed was intubated with a breathing tube and put into a coma as a team of physicians led by Dr. Fisher and electrophysiologist colleagues Jose Nazari, MD, and Alex Ro, MD, carefully monitored her condition. Drs. Fisher and Nazari hold academic appointments at the University of Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine; Dr. Ro holds an academic title at the Pritzker School of Medicine.

The cardiologists also connected with their NorthShore peers in obstetrics and gynecology for their expertise on the maximum dosages of magnesium, which is often used to stop labor. In Syed's case, it was administered to stop her arrhythmia.

"Sometimes you have the perfect storm of negative things. But in this case, we had the perfect confluence of positives with cooperative treatment between three electrophysiologists, our colleagues in OB/GYN and one of the world's experts on the disease a phone call away," said Dr. Nazari.

Syed had an automatic cardiac defibrillator implanted and now sees Dr. Fisher on a regular basis. She has had no further problems and received an absolutely positive prognosis.

"The fact that you have someone who was intubated and in a coma who can come back to the clinic and give you a hug is why you become a doctor in the first place," added Dr. Fisher. "This was a phenomenal team effort!"

Connected to International Expertise

Mayo Clinic's Michael Ackerman, MD, PhD, is a leading expert in acquired and congenital long QT syndrome and recently presented Grand Rounds on the subject at Evanston Hospital. The timing of the talk was fortuitous because it preceded Sana Syed's emergency visit.

"NorthShore's team contacted me because of our collaboration, and we had a great physician-to-physician consultation," said Dr. Ackerman. "This case really was a success story and shows how these kinds of relationships can be a win-win, with the most important win for the patient."