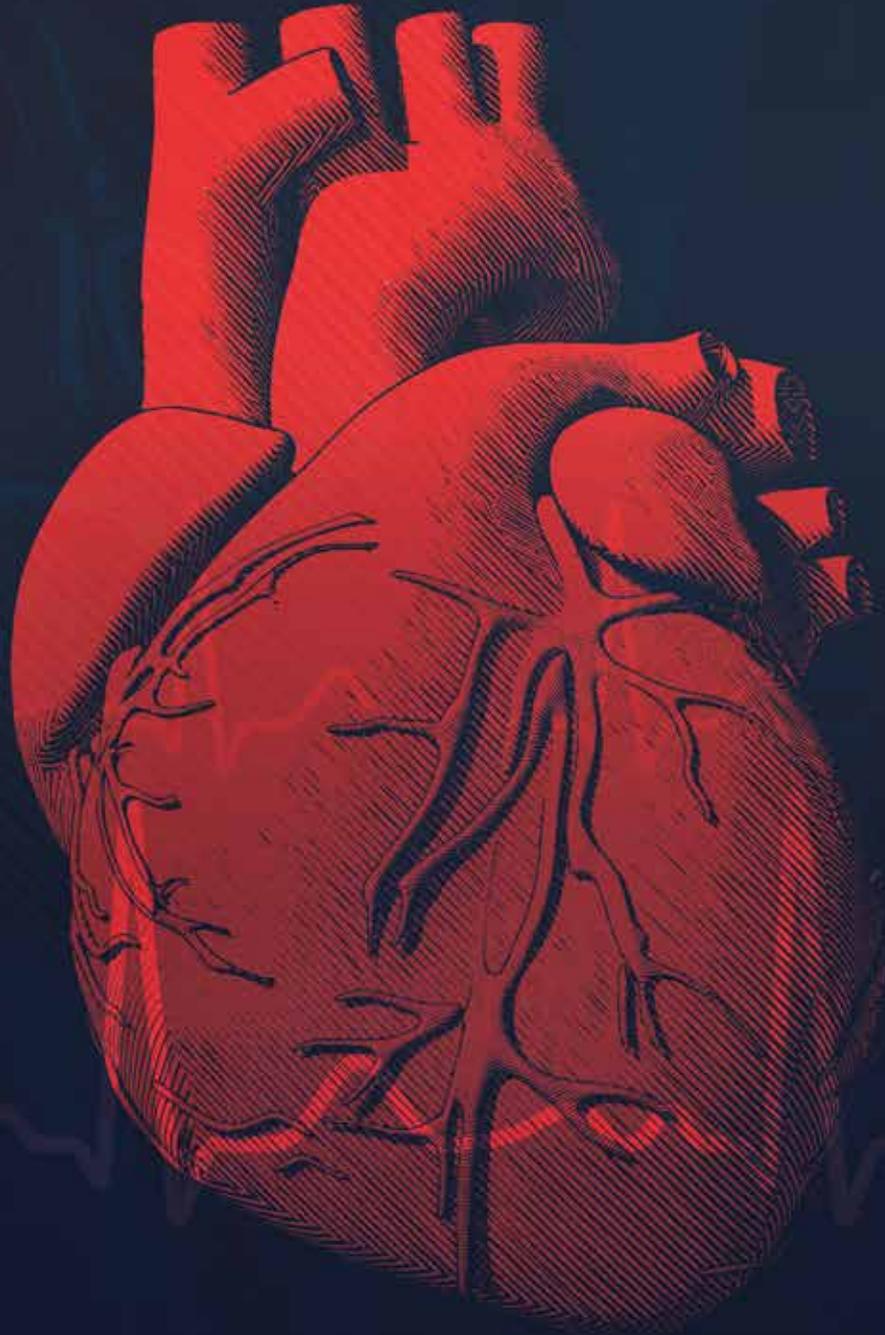


# WHAT ANY EMERGENCY PHYSICIAN WOULD HAVE DONE



A HOCKEY RINK, A HEART ATTACK, AND A MORE  
COMPLICATED STORY THAN SHOWN ON TV

## MIRACLE ON ICE

### It was truly a made-for-TV moment.

A man collapsed limp on the ice while playing a pick-up hockey game at a rink just outside Charlotte, North Carolina. Fellow players rushed to his side, trying to figure out what happened. Within moments, another figure – USACS’ Dr. Craig Bryant – skated into the frame and took over. He checked his pulse. He started CPR. He saved the man’s life.

And: the whole thing was caught on the rink’s security cameras. The local Fox TV station did a story, calling it a “Miracle on Ice.” Other stations followed suit: Fox 5 Atlanta ran a piece. WCNC, the local NBC affiliate, did a segment on it. Then it went national with The Today Show and Inside Edition; then international, when CBC in Canada covered the story.

But what happened on the ice that day is actually a bit more complicated than what the television stations would have you believe. For Bryant, skating over to help a player who had collapsed, 54-year-old Jib Street, is simply what any physician would have done. Indeed, it’s the kind of moment that led Bryant to go into medicine in the first place.

### The Odds of Survival

At age 16, Bryant was on summer vacation at his family’s lake house in Pennsylvania. He and a friend had been walking down the road when they found a neighbor calling for help because her husband had just collapsed.

“My friend and I didn’t know what to do, so we called 9-1-1. I felt otherwise helpless,” Bryant said. “I never wanted to be put in that situation again.”

It was not to be like that years later.



▲ **GRATITUDE.** Jib Street (left) presented Dr. Craig Bryant (right) with a jersey after saving his life – twice.

Walking through the events of the day at the ice rink, Bryant knew exactly what to do. When he saw Street go down, others were concerned he may have hit his head on the ice. But Bryant knew the bigger problem was why he’d fallen in the first place. While others who got to Street first were hypothesizing a seizure, it was Bryant who checked Street’s pulse, saw his shallow breathing, and determined it was cardiac arrest.

Bryant was able to be the hero that day (or, as he calls it, simply “playing doctor”). But, he also said it’s possible that Street still would have survived had he not been there, though it’s unlikely he would have come to a full neurological recovery.

In Street’s favor, the EMS team that responded, for example, was staged just a few blocks away. Street collapsed at 12:12 p.m. – as the security camera footage shows – and by 12:19 p.m., Street was being loaded onto a stretcher. Meanwhile, the hospital where Bryant works, Atrium Health System, was very close by. Door-to-door from the Pineville Ice House where they were skating to the Emergency Department is

just a mile and a half. Furthermore, the ice rink had a portable AED on premises, a crucial piece of equipment that Bryant knew was there and which he used to resuscitate Street.

But, had Bryant not been there, it’s likely the rink’s staff or a teammate could also have used it.

“The machine speaks to you – so it walks you through step by step, and it requests to analyze, and it does its analyzing, and then it will advise shock,” Bryant said.

In short, it’s designed as simply as possible so that one need not have an emergency physician present in order to effectively use it. Also: the rink’s staff were all trained in CPR, something Bryant later learned.

“We’re used to intercepting patients who have had bystander CPR in the field,” Bryant said. “But they usually require aggressive life support measures upon arrival.”

According to the American Heart Association, more than 350,000 people suffer cardiac arrest outside of a hospital each year, and of those, 90 percent die. Street likely would not have been



amongst that 90 percent. But, Bryant's presence on the rink that day, skating over immediately, determining right away that Street was in cardiac arrest, being able to provide quality CPR, knowing about the AED, combining that all with the quick response time of EMS, the nearby hospital, and the support of the other players who assisted Bryant - all are factors responsible for Street's having avoided serious damage to his brain or other vital organs.

### **More Afraid of the Bills Than of Dying**

But here's the part that didn't get into any of the TV reports, not a single one: after being resuscitated, Jib Street did not want to go to the hospital. The reason is as predictable as the 28.5 million people in the U.S. in Street's shoes:

he didn't have health insurance.

"I am so freakin' happy to be alive," Street said. "Craig didn't just save my life, there were a ton of people involved. But he was there, he jumped over the boards, he's the one who assessed me and pumped my organs. He's the reason I don't have brain damage right now."

But after Bryant saved Street's life once, Street says he had to save it again.

As Street came to on a stretcher in the back on an ambulance, he thought maybe he had passed out, or perhaps fallen asleep. Street recalls he still didn't really know what had just happened to him, but he did remember one thing: he didn't have health insurance.

"I was at a point where I was more afraid of the bills than I was of dying," he said.

Meanwhile, Bryant had gone back

to continue the pickup hockey game. He had already contacted the physician working that day at the Pineville Emergency Department to let them know what had happened, so he felt Street was in good hands. But it wasn't too long until staff at the rink came and called Bryant off the ice again: "They told me Mr. Street was in the back of the ambulance and didn't want to go to the hospital. He was refusing transport."

Street was transparent about his reasons for not wanting to get additional medical care: he had just been through a nasty divorce. As part of the proceedings, the family health insurance plan he'd been paying for had been awarded to his wife and daughter. He was removed from it and hadn't yet applied for a new plan. On top of that, all the plans he looked at for a 54-year-



“He saved me, and then he saved me again”

▲ **TEAMMATES.** Jib Street (right) and Dr. Craig Bryant’s story was told all over the world after Street went into cardiac arrest on the hockey rink and Bryant was able to save him through CPR and use of an AED – and then convince him to go to the hospital for continued aid.

old who worked primarily as an independent contractor were so expensive, he wasn’t sure he could afford them in the aftermath of his divorce.

The thing is, Street really did need to go to the hospital. After Bryant convinced Street to go, doctors at Atrium Health System discovered a blockage to his arteries and evidence of a previous “silent heart attack.” He needed surgery to have an ICD (Implantable Cardioverter Defibrillator) inserted, so that it could monitor his heart rate and shock Street’s heart back to its normal beat if needed. The device will likely save Street’s life in the future multiple times over.

In a very real sense, the conversa-

tion Bryant had with Street in the back of the ambulance was as much a life saver as the initial care Bryant had provided on the rink.

### A New Hero

Street is still recovering: mentally, financially and physically. He was in the hospital for five or six days after collapsing, but the surgery he had to implant the ICD the first time didn’t work; the device didn’t set in properly to where the wire goes into the heart. So that meant another surgery, another hospital stay, and another round of medical bills.

Regardless of the financial costs,

Street said he is eternally grateful for the care he received: “Dr. Bryant saved me. He said, ‘Don’t worry, I’m here to take care of you, I want you to go to the hospital.’ He saved me, and then he saved me again.”

In gratitude, Street gave Bryant one of his most prized possessions: a Wayne Gretzky jersey, signed by Gretzky himself, which had hung in Street’s office for more than 20 years. In its place, Street hung up the jersey he was wearing when he collapsed – but signed by Bryant.

After all, Street said, he has a new hero.