

Intervention Energized His Life and Attitude – Alan Sclar’s Story



Alan Sclar, a father of four, started having regular cardiology check-ups when he reached his 50s. He had no significant symptoms of heart disease, but his check-up in March 2021 revealed a spike in his calcium levels. His cardiologist, Aaron Freilich, MD, suggested that out of an abundance of caution, he should undergo further testing on his heart.

This eventually led to the discovery and treatment of a dangerously blocked artery in a minimally invasive heart procedure by Samin K. Sharma, MD, Director of Interventional Cardiology at The Mount Sinai Hospital and a renowned expert in complex coronary interventions. With this new “second chance” at health, Alan was inspired to make lasting changes in his lifestyle.

At the start of this journey, Dr. Sharma’s office arranged for Alan to come in for a cardiac catheterization and an angiogram in November 2021 at the Cardiac Catheterization Laboratory at The Mount Sinai Hospital. “I remember meeting Dr. Sharma for the first time,” Alan says. “He was at once humble and very confident, and that made me feel at ease right away. I knew I was in good hands.”

A left heart catheterization involves passing a catheter (a thin flexible tube) into the left side of the heart to look for potential arterial blockages. The procedure is often combined with an angiogram, an imaging test that uses X-rays and a special dye to see inside the arteries. For more than 24 years, the Cardiac Catheterization Laboratory at The Mount Sinai Hospital has received the highest two-star safety rating from the New York State Department of Health for these percutaneous coronary interventions (PCI), also known as angioplasty.

“I remember it wasn't that long of a procedure,” Alan says. “Dr. Sharma was smiling. He said, ‘Look, everything was mostly normal, except for your widow-maker artery. If this artery is blocked, you could have had a heart attack and died.’”

Blockage of the left anterior descending artery (LAD)—known as widow-maker artery—can stop blood flow to the left side of the heart and lead to a major heart attack. In Alan’s case, the artery was 95 percent blocked. Dr. Sharma and his team inserted a stent into the LAD and unblocked the artery.

The procedure was a complete success, and Alan was discharged the next day. He has had no further issues with his heart, but has made considerable changes to his lifestyle to help keep his heart healthy from now on.

“Up until the time that I had my procedure, I weighed around 240 pounds, but I never thought I had a lack of energy,” Alan says. “But after the procedure, I decided that I was given this second chance, and I started reading about living a healthier lifestyle. I adopted a vegan diet, and now I work out and lift weights, and I have to say, I feel like a different person. I lost 40 pounds of fat and gained 15 pounds of muscle in about 15 months. I now have a lot more energy and vigor, and I even feel sharper mentally. I feel like I can contribute even more than I could before. As an attorney while CEO of a startup and a single father, I need the energy.”

“Alan is the ‘poster child’ for a patient who has made the right changes to their lifestyle,” says Dr. Sharma.

“I always say life is too important to be taken seriously, but it’s so important to find the right people in your life,” Alan says. “I feel so lucky Dr. Sharma has come into my life. He is the very best, he really saved me.”