

Heart Care in the Time of COVID-19

Charles Dorman had always wanted to do the Great Loop, navigating the waterways around the eastern U.S. from Florida to Canada and back home to Savannah, Georgia. In early spring, he and his wife bought a 39-foot trawler and began the long trip.

At 66, Dorman is in great shape. He's run a few half marathons and had no concerns about his health. But while docked in Fort Myers, he went for a short run and suddenly ran out of steam. He figured it was something he ate, but three more incidents convinced him – and his wife, Amanda – that they were dealing with something more serious.



Charles Dorman and his wife, Amanda, on their boat with flags from the America's Great Loop

Cruisers' Association.

In March, the couple were at Marathon Key, where Dorman found a doctor. He was initially scheduled for a stress test and bloodwork to check out his heart function, but the COVID-19 pandemic pushed them out to June. He didn't want to wait.

Dorman rescheduled his tests at the University of Miami Health System, where he saw interventional cardiologist Mauricio Cohen, M.D., professor of medicine. Though he was worried about the COVID-19 risk, Dorman had more pressing concerns.

"We're talking about something serious happening with my heart," said Dorman. "I felt like I was taking a bigger risk not coming, and the health staff at UM followed safety precautions to the letter."

After testing negative for COVID-19, Dorman's stress test showed he had a serious occlusion and would need a cardiac catheterization to clear it.

"We did a cath procedure and found he had a very tight blockage in his right coronary artery," said Dr. Cohen. "We stented him, and he went home that day. So, very little chance of COVID exposure in an area that was completely isolated from COVID patients. We have a program that identifies the patients who can be discharged home on the same day as their procedure, and that helps keep patients here for the shortest time possible."

Dorman was amazed at how quickly he was treated and discharged. After the procedure, and a four-hour observation period, he was ready to go home. He feels great and is eager

to start running again, though he is starting slowly with long walks.

“This was about as surreal as it gets that you have your heart fixed and go home and sleep in your bed,” he said.

Dr. Cohen and colleagues have been quite successful at safeguarding their heart patients from the coronavirus and will continue to do everything they can to reduce the COVID-19 risks. Miller School cardiologists recently started the [COVID-19 Heart Program](#) as a way to continue caring for cardiac patients during the pandemic and to also reach patients who may experience cardiac symptoms due to contracting COVID-19. UM cardiologists are also taking on a leadership role in researching COVID-19 and the virus’ impact on the heart.

With Dorman’s case, Dr. Cohen noted that he made the right choice getting it checked out and treated.

“COVID-19 makes everything a little bit scary, particularly coming to the hospital,” said Dr. Cohen. “But if you are feeling discomfort and are worried, you should definitely come in, and don’t delay. The sooner we can figure out what’s wrong, the better the outcome.”

Call [305-689-2636](tel:305-689-2636) to schedule an appointment.