

# Aphasia Insights!

April 2020  
Volume 2, Issue 06  
April 28, 2020

*“Illness is the night-side of life, a more onerous citizenship. Everyone who is born holds dual citizenship, in the kingdom of the well and in the kingdom of the sick. Although we all prefer to use only the good password, sooner or later each of us is obliged, at least for a spell, to identify ourselves as citizens of that other place.”*

## **Illness as Metaphor Susan Sontag (1933-2004)**

American writer, filmmaker, philosopher, teacher, political activist, author.

Stroke Educator, Inc. is committed to educating the wider public about stroke and the 50 state “*Aim High for Aphasia!*” Aphasia Awareness Campaign.

Stroke Educator, Inc.  
541 Domenico Circle  
St. Augustine, FL 32086  
207-798-1449  
[tbroussa@comcast.net](mailto:tbroussa@comcast.net)  
[www.strokeeducator.com](http://www.strokeeducator.com)

## *Self-Interview about TAVR, Dr. Arnaoutakis (Dr. A.) and the UFHealth Heroes.*

*By Tom Broussard, Ph.D.*

### ***1. What would I say about the team at UF Health?***

The care in my cubby (the old building, not the new one) had a real family feel to it. We were close physically. I could see them and they could see me. The nurses and attending doctors came in looking for battle regardless, with their scrubs, hats on and mask at the ready. I really liked the cubby environment.

I have been to the new building and have looked for the old crew but the floors are so big and rooms dispersed such I found a couple of the crew but I am glad I found some! I dropped off some copies of

my third book for the group. They already had my first two books in their office. My fourth book will be published this month so I will bring the new book to my next appointment with Dr. A. this summer.

I arrived on a Friday and was stable by then. I was informed that the operating rooms were all booked for the following week. They thought that I could go home and wait for another week to get

my TAVR. I was told that I would leave on Saturday. I knew that some of my nurses didn't want me to leave...and I was worried too. I had had a breathing attack at the first hospital and it wasn't fun.



Dr. A. & Dr. Tom

That all changed when I had a terrible breathing attack Friday night. I could not breathe at all and thought that I would die. I started beating on the bed (that was my equivalent of screaming) and they called for the ventilator.

The ventilator “expert” came in with one and started assembling it. I imagine it took a minute to two to start but to me it felt like forever. But what kept me calm (as calm as I could be) was the ventilator “expert”.

He talked to me the entire time while his hands were flying, assembling the machine and plugging everything together. He explained what was happening, told me I was doing just fine and that things would be good in a minute or two. Time did fly as (what I called an industrial CPAP) ventilator took over my breathing. The ventilator “expert” was a hero.

After removing my ventilator 14 hours later on that Saturday (I was supposed to be going home that day), the nurses returning to my room full of smiles. I wondered why they were smiling and they told me that they were happy because I was NOT going home. My “surgery” had been bumped to #1 for TAVR surgery the following week. My nurses were heroes. Everybody in the building were all heroes to me!

## **2. Would you recommend UF Health to other people?**

Given my experience, why *wouldn't* I recommend UF Health to everyone? When I got sick, I had been admitted to my local hospital. Shortly thereafter, I was told that they could not do a TAVR. I had to be transported to one that could...Shands at UF Health. Apparently, there were some

options but I heard from the local hospital staff that Shands and UF Health was the way to go.

## **3. What would you say to people contemplating having surgery at UF Health?**

I was in an emergency condition and had no time to consider one hospital or another, or one surgery procedure option or another. I had already had open heart surgery 6 years before so I knew that there was risk no matter what I might have considered. At that point, you just want the best doctor and the best hospital, and Shands/UFHealth is it.



## **4. What would you say to Dr. Arnaoutakis and team, if you could?**

Dr. A and his team are the best! I talked with Dr. A a few times before the procedure. He is a good person and happy to talk with the patients at length. But what sealed the deal for me (that Dr. A is the best) was the team huddle on that Tuesday morning.

That morning I was dressed for the operation and ready to go with Dr. A. and a team of doctors (anesthesiologist, surgeons, and nurses) and others. The team was

arranged around the door and Dr. Arnaoutakis asked each one for their opinions about my condition and prognosis. One doctor did think that maybe I was too weak and not strong enough to get through the operation without resting for a few days. After the team went around the table (I *was* the table!), Dr. A. was the last.

At that point, Dr. A. summarized the comments and told them, and me, that if I didn't get this procedure done “today”, he (me) may not make it. And I said, “not make it, as in...?” and he said “if we don't do this today, you might die.”

He looked at the group for agreement...no dissension, the least of it, me, and off we went! Dr. A. and all of his team were heroes!

Signed: *The Johnny Appleseed of Aphasia Awareness.*