

The three amigos

a • mi • go [uh-mee-goh, ah-mee-; Sp. ah-mee-gaw]

-noun, plural -gos [gohz; Sp. -gaws]

a friend, a person you know well and regard with affection and trust.

Suffering a stroke can be a frightening, isolating experience and the recovery process can seem overwhelming. Three Madonna patients recently discovered that by banding together so they could overcome these fears.

Bruce Hardin, Gary McMains and Deo Rankin had suffered strokes of varying degrees. They often lunched with each other at Madonna and began connecting by telling their stories.

Bruce, 52, of Lincoln, Neb., is a locomotive engineer for Burlington Northern Santa Fe and suffered his stroke at home in early April. “It was a wake-up call for me,” Bruce said. “Madonna’s staff had to use the patient lift to move me when I was admitted because I’d lost the use of my arms and legs.”

Gary, 52, and a trained EMT, works in the parts department for Ford Motors in Hebron, Neb. During his routine morning cup of coffee on April 23, he began feeling queasy and felt like he was on fire. “I walked out on my deck to get some air, quickly realized the situation was serious and called 911 on my cell phone,” Gary shared. “I was in severe respiratory distress and stroked on the way to the hospital.” Gary came to Madonna after spending a week at St. Elizabeth Regional Medical Center. “Coming here was the best thing that ever happened to me,” he said.

Deo Rankin, 79, originally from Kansas City, Mo., suffered a stroke in April at the home he shares with his daughter in Omaha. The stroke affected his legs, use of his right hand and caused physical weakness. He’s been using the H200™ NESS® in therapy for his hand. “I feel so fortunate to have come to Madonna,” Deo said.

The three patients were nicked-named “The Three Amigos” by Madonna nurses who noticed their friendship. Bruce chuckled, “I think our camaraderie keeps us sane.” “We encourage each other like, ‘Hey, you couldn’t do that yesterday,’ that type of thing,” he said. Gary added “By the second day here, I knew I had to get out of my room and socialize. I met Bruce and Deo and we’re our own best support group.” Deo said his friends congratulate him on making strides in his therapy. “We’ve enjoyed the community group outings together, too.”

The group outings included trips to Woods Park to play tennis and Holmes Lake for fishing with other patients. Bruce said, “It’s like your reward for doing your therapy.” He gave the therapists high marks for giving patients freedom when they’ve reached the stage to handle it. Gary added, “Everyone at Madonna is fantastic and encouraging - from the housekeeping staff to the therapists.”

They all agree their friendship helped them overcome recovery hurdles. Bruce said they try to meet the new stroke patients and encourage them, too. Gary said “A new patient might be struggling eating lunch, spilling on themselves and we’re like, ‘Hey, no big deal, we’ve all done it.’” He knows firsthand how comments like that can go a long way in lifting a stroke patient’s mood. Gary said, “We try to encourage the other patients because it’s a win-win — it helps them and helps us, too.”

What will happen to “The Three Amigos” once their therapy is complete at Madonna? Gary summed it up best saying, “We plan to stay in touch with each other. We’re kind of unique. It’s definitely made a difference in my recovery.”



“The Three Amigos” (left to right) Bruce Hardin, Deo Rankin and Gary McMains