

## QualityPath Guides Heart Surgery Patient Through Shared Decision Making

**“I wasn’t overweight. I didn’t smoke. I couldn’t believe it,” said Nguyen Tran.  
“I was only 49 years old.”**

Nguyen learned that he needed triple-bypass surgery on his heart.

He’d run a marathon in 1999, but in recent years Nguyen and his wife, Jaimie, had started a family and put their running shoes to better use by keeping up with their four young children.

Recently, a friend suggested that Nguyen enter an upcoming marathon. Nguyen, decided it was an excellent opportunity to get back into long-distance running and be a healthy role model to his kids.

Nguyen started with short training runs. Then he decided to try a longer route with a hill. During the run, something didn’t feel quite right as he was running up the steep hill. Nguyen was winded and dizzy by the second mile of his planned nine-mile training run. He turned around and headed home, wondering what had suddenly made him dizzy.

Test results showed significant blockage in three of his four cardiac arteries.

Nguyen was shocked to learn of his test results. He had questions. Lots of them. He needed more information. But the cardiologist’s office didn’t always answer his questions in a timely manner.

### He wanted a second opinion. Now.

#### QualityPath Provided Information in a Timely Manner

Nguyen was an enrollee of The Alliance through his wife’s benefit plan. He called The Alliance’s Customer Service department. Here, Nguyen learned that Coronary Artery Bypass Graft (CABG) surgeries, commonly known as “bypass surgery,” are part of the *QualityPath* program included in his benefits through his wife’s employer.

Nguyen spoke with Margie Czechowicz, The Alliance’s Patient Experience Manager.

Margie clearly explained how all *QualityPath* surgical doctor and hospital pairings meet or exceed quality standards based on national measures and recommended practices for care.

She also explained how patient support is built into *QualityPath* for surgeries. Margie is a registered nurse and certified case manager. She is the point of contact for all patients who participate in *QualityPath* surgeries to ensure they receive the full benefits of *QualityPath*. She also serves as a direct resource for the patient and their family, should any questions or concerns arise.

Margie and Nguyen also discussed the bundled services covered as a part of a *QualityPath* heart surgery. They include a warranty on the surgery and outpatient cardiac rehabilitation.

Services provided in the bundle were covered at 100% with no deductible.



## 'I Found the Best Care and Peace of Mind.'

A friend of Nguyen's had cardiac bypass surgery a few years earlier and recommended his surgeon. The same surgeon and hospital were part of *QualityPath*, making it a win-win for Nguyen.

"Fear of the unknown drives me crazy," said Nguyen.

Previous providers did not always return Nguyen's calls promptly. However, *QualityPath* providers and Margie answered Nguyen's questions and armed him with information. This reduced his stress about having heart surgery.

"It was like a night and day switch compared to previous providers," said Nguyen. "When I had questions, I was given answers in a timely manner."

*QualityPath* patients are informed of the benefits and risks of surgery in order to make medical decisions that are best for them.

"The cardiologist, his staff, the patient experience manager and I were all on the same page about my condition," Nguyen said. "It gave me peace of mind that everyone was frank and truthful about my options. It made a difficult situation much more bearable to go through. Less stress!"

This made Nguyen more comfortable in talking to his family about scheduling triple-bypass surgery.

### Life-Changing Surgery

Nguyen had never been a patient in a hospital before his triple bypass surgery. He was understandably nervous: for himself, for his wife, for his kids.

Nguyen understood his heart disease was severe. He knew that he needed surgery as soon as possible. So when another patient's surgery was cancelled, Nguyen accepted the open surgical appointment. Just six days after his surgical consult, Nguyen had heart surgery.

"The people I met during my *QualityPath* journey gave me the confidence to do what I needed to do," said Nguyen.

Margie stopped by the hospital to check on Nguyen the day after his successful triple-bypass surgery.

As The Alliance's Patient Experience Manager, Margie made sure that Nguyen's family had everything they needed to facilitate Nguyen's full recovery.

Margie talked to Jaimie about how to assist in Nguyen's recovery when he returned home. "When someone is used to doing everything for themselves,



it can be challenging to be their caregiver," said Margie.

And they talked about how to explain heart disease to their young kids all less than 10 years old.

### A Positive Attitude for the Future

Nguyen kept a positive attitude throughout his *QualityPath* journey. He took things slow as he strengthened his heart after surgery.

"It was nerve-racking the first time I ran on a treadmill during rehab. I was hooked up to monitors and staff was there watching my every move," said Nguyen.

Rehab gave him the confidence to continue making positive changes in his life.

"I'm taking care of myself. I'm eating healthy," said Nguyen, "I'm running on a treadmill."

Four months after surgery, Nguyen is looking forward to running the trails near his home soon. His kids are planning on riding their bikes and cheering their Dad along the way.

"I'm enjoying life and am looking forward to seeing my kids grow up," said Nguyen. "I couldn't have asked for a better outcome."

### Nguyen's Advice

"Proceed with confidence, because you will receive the best care. It's as simple as that," said Nguyen.

To learn more about *QualityPath* go to: [www.qualitypath.com](http://www.qualitypath.com).

Or if a *QualityPath* surgery may be in your future, contact The Alliance Patient Experience Manager at: 800.223.4139, x6607.