After Near-Tragedy, Firm Takes Cardiac Safety to Heart

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In the article, "After Near-Tragedy, Firm Takes Cardiac Safety to Heart," featured in *American Lawyer*, Partner Jim Holland recalled a life changing event that forever changed his outlook on cardiac arrest preparedness in the workplace.

Jim and his wife Nancy were having dinner at a local restaurant last January when Nancy failed to return from the restroom. He went to check on her and found her collapsed on the floor, suffering sudden cardiac arrest due to a blood clot in her heart.

As paramedics fought to save his wife's life, Jim learned that a restaurant manager had already administered CPR, almost immediately after Nancy fell to the ground, and that a first responder had used an automatic external defibrillator to collect information about her heart rhythms and deliver electric shocks.

Nancy Holland spent the next several days in an induced coma, with her family wondering if she would be left with permanent brain damage. But thanks to the restaurant's trained staff member and the quick use of an AED, her husband said, she emerged fine, having forgotten only the passcode to her cellphone.

"The AED by itself is only so good," said Jim. "[CPR kept Nancy] where she would be savable within a few minutes and avoid brain damage so the AED could get to her." They are "both good by themselves, but having them work together" allows for the greatest benefit, he added.

Jim's experience led to changes at Atlanta-based Fisher Phillips, which has 330 lawyers and 33 offices around the country. The firm now has AEDs installed in each of its locations, and it launched a program to train all of its lawyers and staff members in CPR.

Jim said he hopes other firms that don't have similar precautions in place will follow suit.

"My primary objective is just to try to get the word out that we did it, and that we hope to encourage other firms to do the same," he added.

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