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News in Brief

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Robert Petcove has spent nearly three decades helping hospitals and health systems provide benefits to their employees. Yet, until this year, impacted wisdom teeth had been the Cherry Hill, New Jersey, native’s biggest health issue. That changed over Mother’s Day weekend – when a couple of flu-like accidents culminated in a life-threatening Strep A infection.

"On Mother’s Day, I cut my right forearm as I was cleaning out an old aquarium," Petcove, 48, recalls. "It was a very small cut that barely bled, but since I’m familiar with fish tank diseases that can be transmitted to humans, I cleaned it carefully."

Later that day, Petcove, who has three sons, was jumping on a trampoline with his kids. When he felt on to that same arm, he felt a twinge – “like a hairline fracture,” he says.

By the next morning, his right arm was screaming in pain. Assuming an orthopedic issue, he sought help from that specialty. With no fracture found, he received an injection to help with the pain and resumed normal activities. Within another day or so, the pain had returned and spread, and there was redness in his arm. He saw another orthopedic specialist, who also administered an injectable painkiller. But by Thursday morning, Petcove says he could barely get out of bed. When he finally made it to the bathroom, he noticed that his urine was the color of iced tea – which he recognized as a sign of kidney failure.

Within five hours of arriving at Jefferson’s Emergency Department with his wife, Petcove was undergoing what would be the first of five surgeries over seven days. He says the process was akin to storm chasing. As parts of his body became red and irritated, surgeons had to operate to eradicate what they discovered was a Strep A infection.

After spending about 10 days in the Intensive Care Unit—and another 14 days on IV antibiotics—Petcove was on his way to a full recovery. In fact, he’s already resumed golf and tennis. Petcove credits his recovery to the collaboration between Jefferson’s Acute Care Surgery and Infectious Disease teams: “In a different hospital, I may not be here today,” he says. “Jefferson delivered world-class care by compassionate people who treated me like a true patient–customer – not just a body sleeping in a bed.”

He and his wife, Jill, have expressed their gratitude with a gift honoring Drs. Aniruddh Kohli, Matthew LaPorta, Joshua Marks, Michael Weinstein, and Zachary Callahan in the Department of Surgery. Dr. Katherine Belden in the Department of Medicine, and Critical Care Technician Jared Ruley. To learn more about supporting critical care at Jefferson, please visit giving.jefferson.edu or contact Kelly Austin in the Office of Institutional Advancement at 215-955-6583 or Kelly.Austin@jefferson.edu.