

Paul Chatlin is a true friend and lifesaver to all. But it could be he is just giving back. His story of chronic, debilitating, chest pain, and the diagnosis of coronary artery disease will stop you in your tracks, just as it did to Paul.

Paul's story really begins in May of 2013 when his chronic chest pain had reached its peak. Paul knew that he needed to find out the cause.

Here's how the story goes, in Paul's own words:

"I knew I was not well. I had to take a break to catch my breath every 10 steps or so. I felt the pressure on my chest every morning.

I started not wanting to wake up because I knew what was next. After a period of time the pain would stop and I would move on with my day, but now I had to make many, many more stops to rest.

I was more sad than depressed and scared to what was going to happen to me. What happened to my family growing up was now happening to me."

After months and months of angina, chest pain grew in intensity, and duration. Paul knew that something needed to be done, but fear can often become a detour to reality. Paul's instincts, and a caring wife, knew that he needed to get to the hospital. He was feeling "really bad, the kind of bad when you know something was NOT right."

Here's What Paul Did to Turn Things Around:

"With the help of my wife, Tracey, she spoke to her bosses who were able to get me an appointment at the Cleveland Clinic in just 3 weeks, (miracle #1).

I was then assigned to a cardiologist whose mentor just happened to be Dr. Caldwell Esselstyn (how lucky was I?). With all of the cardiologists working at the Cleveland Clinic, I got assigned to the ONE doctor who understood Plant Based Nutrition and whose mentor was Dr. Esselstyn, (miracle #2).

Then, just after my heart catheterization (when they finally found out what my problem was), my doctor called Dr. Esselstyn while I was in the recovery room (still on a gurney) and said "Hi Essy, this is Mazen, I think I have a patient for you."

He handed me the phone, and I heard, "Hi Paul, this is Dr. Esselstyn. I think I can help you. So go on home and I will call you first thing in the morning, (miracle #3).

The next day at 8 a.m., Dr. Esselstyn called, and that's when I started my deep love and respect for him."

According to Paul, If you've ever had angina, "it feels like very heavy pressure on your chest and you are very short of breath."

Chatlin shares that a cardiac catheterization revealed he had 100% blocked artery, and two others were blocked at 65%. Other cardiac conditions also complicated this situation.

His cardiologist gave him two options, by-pass surgery, or try a plant-based diet. That's when he met Dr. Esselstyn, and after that meeting, Paul decided to follow the pillars of Dr. Esselstyn's book, Prevent and Reverse Heart Disease.

Paul reported that after just three short weeks, his angina disappeared. Within one year, his cholesterol levels dropped from 309 to 122, and now at 57, he has lost 43 pounds and maintained the loss. He reports his energy is sky rocketing and he feels the picture of vitality and hope

Then Paul decided to do something unique and give back by reaching out to help others and created the "Plant-Based Nutrition Support Group(PBNSG)." Michigan-based, and only two years old, PBNSG has nearly 2000 members, and promotes plant-based nutrition through meetings, seminars, and more. As founder, he has his own posse of followers and they are all getting healthier, one forkful of kale at a time.

We asked Paul "five easy questions" and his responses are heartfelt, warm, and filled with hope.

CN : What was your "ah-ha" moment to embrace a whole-foods, plant-based, no-oil lifestyle?

PC: My Ah-ha moment was at the Cleveland Clinic, on that gurney, just after finding out (through a heart catheterization) that I had one artery 100% blocked and 2 others blocked at 65%. That's when I found out about Dr. Esselstyn and his program at the Wellness Institute.

CN: What are three benefits of living a plant-based lifestyle?

PC: 1) More energy; 2) Better for both animals and our planet ; 3) Allowed me NOT to have by-pass surgery. You see, all the men in my family have had by-pass surgery when they were in their 50's. Some of my uncles were never the same post-operatively. I watched my father cry in pain for 3-4 days from surgery.

CN: What would you tell a young Paul Chatlin about following Dr. Esselstyn's diet?

PC: If I knew then what I know now, I would tell a young Paul Chatlin to start making the change slowly. I would have added more vegetables, beans, fruits and whole grains into my diet.

CN: Your vision for PBNSG is amazing, tell us how it started!

PC: When I started Plant Based Nutrition Support Group, I contacted 150 cardiologists at the three biggest hospitals in my area. I got one call back. Once again, I knew that something was wrong and decided not to continue and hope for changes with established physicians. I started giving my attention to future doctors.

My friend Karen Frazier (who was directing our Facebook activities) told me about a few Wayne State Medical Students that had a real interest in Plant-Based Nutrition. A few weeks later I met with medical students Amanda Martin and Brittany Vanhouten. I saw such a passion for health from them that together we decided to try to update and improve the nutritional curriculum at Wayne State University. To date we have been approved for 2 hours of plant-based nutrition education.

PBNSG offers CME credits to both doctors and nurses. We are working with fourteen 1st and 2nd year students from five universities, including, University of Michigan, Michigan State University, Wayne State University, Oakland University and Eastern Michigan.

Paul's vision from his experience and recovery from coronary artery disease reminds me of the movie, Field of Dreams. Those famous words, "build it and they will come" underscore Paul's insights to create a group that is changing people's lives and helping all to reach better health outcomes.

But, most of all, we are in admiration of Paul and how he embraced a plant-based diet, not only change his own life, but also to improve the lives of others.