

May 8, 2010

Cristina Gatto

CEP 22.410-000

Dear Christina:

Sometimes the greatest inventions in medicine may come in a single blinding moment of insight. The creation of the A-V fistula falls into this category which will forever remain an historical milestone in all of medical history.

Several facts became evident in the early days of hemodialysis. Primarily, implanted mechanical devices of any kind would never be successful; and secondly, that the biggest problem would be the access to the arterial system easily and repeatedly which would not fail after repeated dialyses.

Thousands of articles appeared in the medical and surgical literature, all of which were crude attempts and expensive failures.

I will reveal to you the exact moment that the fistula was conceived and implemented. When needles were used alone, we could never achieve blood flow sufficient to do effective dialysis. All attempts to sustain life in many young patients awaiting renal transplants had failed and there were multiple deaths each day. Frustrated and depressed, one afternoon at 2 PM, sitting in a small coffee shop, I sat with Dr. Cimino and Dr. Appel, eating a piece of beef with red sauce. I took a napkin and placed it in front of me so as to catch any drippings from the sandwich. On this napkin, I had drawn a simple artery and vein and sat staring at this simple anatomical drawing. A bit of red sauce fell from my lips between the artery and vein and established a connection at which time I used the first words ever, "My God, could we create a fistula?" Dr. Cimino responded in the affirmative and Dr. Appel, a vascular surgeon, said that he could accomplish that surgery. In this moment, in these words, the fistula became a reality.

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