

Statement for the Hearing Record

**Janet Wolf
Second District Supervisor
Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors**

**Submitted to:
The U.S. House of Representatives Committee
on Energy and Commerce
Subcommittee on Health**

**Hearing on H.R. 1014, the Heart Disease Education, Analysis and
Research, and Treatment for Women Act
(HEART for Women Act)
May 1 2007**

On December 7, 2004, I suffered a massive heart attack (100% occluded LAD). I was 50 years old and considered myself very healthy and incredibly blessed. I had a wonderful family and great friends, ran a successful business, had just finished serving 11 years as a school board member, played on a roller hockey team and exercised fairly regularly at the gym. I am 5'4" and at the time of my heart attack I weighed 155 pounds. I was told that I carried "it very well". I had annual medical exams, which included EKG's, blood work and mammograms and I even had a colonoscopy. I felt that I had covered all of my bases.

My experience began on a Friday evening, when after going out to dinner with friends; I experienced extremely painful heartburn which felt like a hole was burning in my esophagus. When I returned home, I took over-the-counter heartburn medication. As the weekend progressed, the heartburn sensation continued intermittently.

By Monday morning, the pain was worse and I noticed that it became more intense after slight exertion. I became concerned that it was more than just heartburn and that it might be cardiac related. I called my internist and I told him that I "was either having a heart attack or a very bad case of heartburn". He listened to my symptoms and prescribed medication for the heartburn. I rushed to the pharmacy to get the prescription filled and took the first pill before leaving the pharmacy.

I went to bed, then woke up at 2:00 in the morning with what I thought was continued horrible heartburn. Because I could not get back to sleep I went on the internet to find out what I could do to ease my discomfort. By 4:00AM the pain was worse and I went back to the internet. This time I went to Web MD and compared the symptoms of heartburn with a heart attack. At that time it didn't appear as if I had any of the symptoms of a heart attack. Then at 5:00AM I started to feel "clammy", a feeling that was described as a heart attack symptom. I decided to wake up my husband. He soon realized, as my pain was getting worse and I was hanging over our kitchen counter, that we should go to the hospital. We arrived at the ER and after what seemed like eternity (probably 15 minutes) I had an EKG and was immediately told that I was having angina.

After having a chest X-ray and finding out that I was also experiencing congestive heart failure, they told me I had indeed had a heart attack. The doctors immediately performed an angioplasty and inserted a medicated stent in my artery.

Approximately 2 weeks later, I began a cardiac rehabilitation program at the hospital three times a week and completed it after 8 weeks.

Since my heart attack, I have modified my lifestyle. I currently work out at my local gym at least 5 times a week. I stopped drinking coffee and I have altered my eating habits by adopting a version of the Mediterranean diet, and I have cut my portions of food in half. I have lost 25 pounds that the hospital dietician recommended I loose.

Many people have expressed a degree of confusion as to how it was me who had a heart attack. The answer to that question remains somewhat elusive, but I am told that in my case, heredity played a big factor. My father, at the age of 52 had coronary bypass surgery and at the age of 65 he had a heart attack and another bypass surgery.

As for my current health status, my cardiologist stated my laboratory results are “superb” and my “exercise, weight control and medication program is paying huge dividends”.

I consider myself very lucky to have received the excellent medical care that I did but in retrospect I wish I had a greater understanding of my own risk factors so that I could have been more proactive.

I'm hopeful that the HEART for Women Act will increase the educational and medical knowledge to a greater number of women who might otherwise not be aware of their risks of heart disease and how to prevent it.

The HEART Act will also result in an important education and awareness campaign for physicians and other healthcare professionals about the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of cardiovascular disease in women.

I urge your committee to support the passage of this Bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.