

**Spontaneous Coronary Artery Dissection is the most common form of heart attack in pregnancy\***

## **Robyn's story**

**Robyn had a SCAD aged 27 soon after her third baby was born. Her fiancé reacted fast to get her to hospital, where she had a cardiac arrest.**

Robyn was 27 when she had a SCAD, two weeks after her third child had been born.

She and her fiancé, Paul, were on their way to see a band they thought they might book for their wedding when she began to feel unwell. She felt hot and had a pain in her arm. Her mother tried to reassure her that she was just having a panic attack because it was the first time she'd left her new baby.

The feeling didn't pass so Paul talked to his step-father who's a paramedic and his advice was to go to A&E. Paul raced to Northampton Hospital with Robyn slipping in and out of consciousness in the car. She remembers little of the car journey.

Robyn said: "When we got there, I started to feel pain in my chest and shoulder. The pain took my breath away. I wanted to drink some water, but when I reached for the glass I couldn't feel it in my hand."

### **Prepare for the worst**

As they got to A&E, Robyn collapsed and her heart stopped. She was rushed to resus and about 40 minutes later a doctor told Paul and her mum to prepare for the worst and to call any family down.

Paul said: "Within moments the family room was filled with all our closest relatives. Robyn's mother and I were taken through and Robyn was hooked up to a Lucas CPR machine, cold to the touch. Her mother began shouting to her and we both spoke to her."

Initially, emergency doctors suspected she'd suffered a massive pulmonary embolism, a blood clot caused by her recent pregnancy. Her heart had stopped and she was not responding to treatment. A total of 22 members of A&E staff carried out CPR, battling to save Robyn's life.



**Robyn with some of the A&E team who helped save her life**

After more than an hour of fighting to get her heart working again, the A&E team revived her.

Then Robyn went for a CT scan, which showed no blood clot, so they then looked at possible cardiac problems. She was rushed to Kettering Hospital where there is a specialist heart centre, and the cardiac team confirmed that one of Robyn's coronary arteries had torn as a result of having a SCAD. She had six stents inserted into the artery.

Robyn and Paul had the chance to meet and thank some of the A&E team who saved her that night.

Northampton emergency medicine consultant Dr Tom Odbert said: "Robyn was extremely lucky to be in hospital when she collapsed where she had immediate, aggressive and persistent resuscitation, and a prompt transfer to a heart attack centre for definitive treatment.

"The combination of the severity of her illness, its rarity, the positive outcome, and the way we all worked together so well as a team all stood out for me. Getting the chance to meet up with her and her family afterwards was a privilege that we do not often get in emergency medicine."

## What is SCAD?

Spontaneous Coronary Artery Dissection (SCAD) is a rare heart condition that cannot be predicted or prevented – yet.

It affects people with few or none of the normal risk factors for heart disease. A tear or a bruise develops in a coronary artery resulting in a blockage that prevents normal blood flow.

SCAD affects young, fit people, mainly women, with no cardiac risk factors. SCAD can happen during or soon after pregnancy.

ECGs may look normal in SCAD patients, so troponin tests should be done to confirm a cardiac event.

## Symptoms of SCAD

- central chest pain
- arm pain or numbness
- pain in the jaw, back or shoulders
- nausea
- sweating/clamminess
- breathing difficulties
- ECG can look normal



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## UK SCAD research & clinics

SCAD symptoms can be similar to ‘normal’ heart attacks, but because the patients are often young, fit and healthy, many have experienced misdiagnosis or delays in diagnosis. Troponin tests should be carried out to confirm a cardiac event.

Dr David Adlam is leading the UK SCAD research project at the Leicester Biomedical Research Centre. Dr Abi Al-Hussaini has worked closely with Dr Adlam during the first three years of the research project.

Contact the research team: [SCAD@uhl-tr.nhs.uk](mailto:SCAD@uhl-tr.nhs.uk)

For more information about SCAD and the research project, see [scad.lcbru.le.ac.uk](http://scad.lcbru.le.ac.uk)

Information for doctors: [scad.lcbru.le.ac.uk/node/10](http://scad.lcbru.le.ac.uk/node/10)

A leaflet for clinicians can be downloaded here: [bit.ly/1ZgPt0h](http://bit.ly/1ZgPt0h)

Dr Adlam holds NHS SCAD clinics at Glenfield Hospital. Contact [julie-anne.moth@uhl-tr.nhs.uk](mailto:julie-anne.moth@uhl-tr.nhs.uk)

Dr Abi Al-Hussaini holds specialist clinics at the Chelsea & Westminster Hospital. Contact [roel.caneja@chelwest.nhs.uk](mailto:roel.caneja@chelwest.nhs.uk)

Both are happy for SCAD patients to be referred to them.

\*The SCAD research project received initial funding from a BHF grant. Since the grant ended, the project is being funded by the Leicester NIHR BRC and Beat SCAD.

## Further information

### Beat SCAD

[beatscad.org.uk](http://beatscad.org.uk)  
[facebook.com/beatscaduk](https://facebook.com/beatscaduk)  
[contactus@beatscad.org.uk](mailto:contactus@beatscad.org.uk)  
Youtube: [bit.ly/1TXhiLV](https://bit.ly/1TXhiLV)

### SCAD research

[mayocl.in/21BZrta](http://mayocl.in/21BZrta) (Mayo Clinic)  
[scad.ubc.ca/canadian-scad-study](http://scad.ubc.ca/canadian-scad-study) (Canada)  
[cle.clinic/2zfHxFL](http://cle.clinic/2zfHxFL) (Cleveland)  
[bit.ly/1SIXMzD](https://bit.ly/1SIXMzD) (Massachusetts)  
[bit.ly/2zvmAr](https://bit.ly/2zvmAr) (Australia)  
[bit.ly/2gom7m3](https://bit.ly/2gom7m3) (European Study Group)

### British Heart Foundation

[bit.ly/1LaOgys](https://bit.ly/1LaOgys) & [bit.ly/1T345Aj](https://bit.ly/1T345Aj)

### Articles and papers about pregnancy-related SCAD

[mayocl.in/2xL4Upm](http://mayocl.in/2xL4Upm)  
[bit.ly/2vogVRZ](https://bit.ly/2vogVRZ)  
[bit.ly/2tLgNd4](https://bit.ly/2tLgNd4)  
[bit.ly/2ua43kw](https://bit.ly/2ua43kw)  
[bit.ly/2tupjlg](https://bit.ly/2tupjlg)  
[bit.ly/2tKPqQg](https://bit.ly/2tKPqQg)  
[bit.ly/2tjzkh8](https://bit.ly/2tjzkh8)  
[bit.ly/2vFWvCY](https://bit.ly/2vFWvCY)  
[bit.ly/2uDkKFc](https://bit.ly/2uDkKFc)  
[bit.ly/2vGk2UC](https://bit.ly/2vGk2UC)  
[bit.ly/2voc2YW](https://bit.ly/2voc2YW)  
[scadalliance.org/publications](http://scadalliance.org/publications)

## Support

It's important for SCAD patients, family and friends to have support from other patients. Support is available from Beat SCAD and the closed Facebook groups listed below.

### SCAD – UK & Ireland Survivors

(Facebook group for SCAD patients)  
[bit.ly/1Mizg9a](https://bit.ly/1Mizg9a)

### SCAD Family and Friends Support Group

(Facebook group)  
[bit.ly/1TMQDwc](https://bit.ly/1TMQDwc)