

Mayo Clinic Preferred Response in action

Alumni connections and willingness to help save a young life



George Love III

Who do we have in Bangkok?" An emergency call came in to Mayo Clinic Preferred Response the afternoon of Jan. 18, 2012, initiating a search for alumni practicing in Bangkok, Thailand.

George Love III, a 19-year-old from Pittsburgh, had been seriously injured when his motorbike was hit by an 18-wheel truck in Phuket, the southernmost island in the Gulf of Thailand. Love has severe hemophilia B.

By the time his family in the United States learned about the accident, Love was bleeding badly and desperately in need of coagulation factor IX. The facilities caring for him in Thailand didn't have a hematologist or enough of this vital medication needed for clotting. Love's family began a frantic mission to get factor IX to him and get the medical care he needed. They reached out to everyone they knew.

"We are world travelers, but we did not know a soul in Thailand," says Jane McGraw, Love's aunt. "We felt completely helpless. We didn't even know for sure where George was because they continued to move him from place to place."

A lead about a familiar place

A friend told McGraw that Mayo Clinic had international connections. The family was familiar with Mayo Clinic. Their patriarch, Howard "Pete" Love, had been treated at Mayo for Parkinson's disease and had recently died. He was the chairman and CEO of National Steel Corp. of Pittsburgh, and he and his wife, Jane, had been Mayo patients for more than 20 years.

Mayo locates the critically ill patient

Two hours after McGraw contacted Mayo, Elliot Riggott, a coordinator with Mayo Clinic Preferred Response, had located her nephew, who had been moved several times, with each facility unable to care for his traumatic injuries and hemophilia. Riggott had even spoken to a physician at Love's current location — a hospital in Phuket.

The hospital told Riggott that they were in short supply of factor IX. Without it, Love would bleed to death. Time was of the essence.

Riggott had sent an email to Mayo Clinic alumni in Bangkok — the capital and most populous city — asking for help. "Who do we have in Bangkok?"

"Elliot reported that George was unconscious, on a respirator, both his right kidney and his spleen were removed. He had lost a lot of blood, and they couldn't stop his bleeding," says McGraw, who lives in New Jersey. "With Mayo in control, we finally knew George's location and condition. By the time George's sister and father arrived in the country with a supply of factor IX, they knew where to deliver it and who to see. Elliot reassured us that Mayo had alumni that can be called upon everywhere and could arrange for medical transportation to get George to a hospital that could handle his critical condition. They made us feel like there was hope for George."

Love's uncle, Howard Love of San Francisco, says that Mayo's strong recommendation that his nephew be transported by air from Phuket to Bumrungrad International Hospital in Bangkok — about 500 miles away — saved his life. Bumrungrad is an internationally accredited multispecialty hospital and the largest private hospital in Southeast Asia.

Elliot Riggott, Mayo Clinic Preferred Response



George Love III (second from left) with his sisters, Madeline (left) and Natalie (right), and father, George Love II, in Lake Placid, N.Y., in December 2013.



Riggott arranged for air transportation along with three medical technicians from Bumrungrad International Hospital to accompany Love, whose heart stopped beating twice on the flight. Mayo Clinic arranged for the intensive care unit at Bumrungrad to accept Love immediately upon his arrival — no small feat in a hospital that serves 8.5 million people.

Alumna at top hospital coordinates on the ground, assembles team

Riggott had invaluable help from a physician on the ground — Rosanee Valyasevi, M.D. (ENDO '00), an endocrinologist at Bumrungrad International Hospital and a Mayo Clinic alumna. She assembled a team of physicians at Bumrungrad to care for Love, including nephrologists, intensivists, cardiologists, infectious disease specialists, hepatologists and surgeons. She also enlisted help from hematologist and fellow alumnus Wichean Mongkonsritragoon, M.D. (PATH '97).

“Dr. Valyasevi was a phenomenal resource,” says Riggott. “She worked with the Phuket hospital where George was and helped to smooth over processes before they would release him. She helped facilitate air transportation to her hospital and made many phone calls. We worked through the night to arrange the high level of care George needed. With the language barriers, government complications and many other challenges, we could not have succeeded without Dr. Valyasevi’s assistance.”

Rosanee Valyasevi, M.D., and Wichean Mongkonsritragoon, M.D.



Dr. Valyasevi had signed up to be part of Mayo Clinic Preferred Response several years earlier but never thought her services would be needed. “Elliot Riggott called me from Mayo Clinic, halfway across the globe, asking for help with George,” she says. “The physicians I work with at Bumrungrad in many specialties were willing to help, regardless of the time required. We arranged the care team in a timely manner. It is amazing how Mayo Clinic can collaborate with hospitals anywhere in the world to help patients in need.”

Love remained at Bumrungrad International Hospital for two months, with six weeks in intensive care. He’d had catastrophic organ failure, and his remaining kidney was badly damaged. He had multiple surgeries.

‘Why you want a relationship with Mayo Clinic’

“My son would not be alive today if not for Mayo Clinic,” says George Love II. “Mayo Clinic did not know us, but they dove right in and went to bat for us. They were in constant contact with us throughout the entire ordeal, asking how they could help. We had red-carpet treatment at Bumrungrad because of the Mayo Clinic connection. Knowing that doctors working on George had trained at Mayo gave us a sense of relief.

“This exemplifies how Mayo is a global hospital. If I ever have a situation where I need a medical opinion or treatment, I will turn to Mayo. This is a great example of why you want a relationship with Mayo Clinic.”

Two years later, George Love III has recovered. He’s a chef in Pittsburgh and runs several miles a day. He’s grateful for the “selfless efforts” made on his behalf.

“While I focused on staying alive, others battled for me,” he says. “It’s remarkable that people who don’t know me went to these lengths. Mayo Clinic’s network is extraordinary.”

McGraw says she travels with greater confidence today, knowing that Mayo Clinic’s international alumni network is available. “It’s incredible that the same medical facility that enhanced my father’s life stepped in to save his grandson’s life,” she says. “My husband and I have put annual physicals at Mayo on our agenda, just like my parents did. We are forever grateful to Mayo Clinic.” ■