



MY NEW ACTIVE LIFE

The story of the first person in the world to receive a Tria valve.

Today, Bob Murley is a 69-year old living in Oregon. Long an active runner, he had slowed down considerably due to aortic stenosis, a condition where the leaflets of the aortic valve of the heart become calcified and stiff, preventing them from pumping enough blood throughout the body. He needed a new heart valve and was chosen as the first person anywhere in the world to be implanted with the Tria heart valve, an innovative device made of a special polymer material that is designed to last a lifetime and solve historical problems with artificial heart valves.

Bob recently celebrated his one-year anniversary with the Tria heart valve and we sat down with him to learn more about his story.

Q Tell us about your life before you developed a heart valve problem.

A I spent many years in automotive assembly where I had a very physically demanding job, lifting car parts—there was something to do every minute of every day. I wanted a less demanding job and went to night school and became a computer analyst. The problem was, after all the activity on the assembly line, I started to gain weight in my desk job—all my physical activity came to a stop. Then I started working with some younger guys who were right out of college. They were going to the gym and staying fit, and they inspired me to start running. In fact, I developed a passion for running. I ended up running at least three miles a day on most days and even completed two half-marathons. When I was training for the half-marathons, I would run up to 10 miles a day and work out at the gym, too.

Q How did you know you had a heart problem?

A Unlike some people, I never felt an obvious problem at first. My aortic stenosis was found during a check-up for my high blood pressure. My doctor could hear my valve problem right through the stethoscope. Once identified, he decided we would watch it, and when the opening of my aortic valve became smaller than one centimeter I would be ready for a new valve.

Over the next couple of years, I started to feel worse and worse. I'd get these pains in my chest or at the bottom of my ribcage and I thought it must be from lifting weights at the gym—it never occurred to me it was my heart. Gradually things changed and I began slowing down.

My heart problem really impacted my running—my runs became shorter and shorter and I was really struggling. At one time earlier in my life, I ran a half-marathon non-stop. A month or two before the procedure, I did a 5K and I had to stop so many times. It used to be that my wife couldn't keep up with me, and then this time I couldn't keep up with her. On one trip to the Grand Canyon, we went to the bottom of the canyon and back in one day, and I wondered if I was going to make it out.

It really gives you a feeling of fear. You don't know if you're going to die one day at the gym. And I had one doctor encouraging me to keep exercising, and then my cardiologist would tell me all these things I shouldn't do. I was really living in fear.



Q How did you make the decision to be the first human to receive a Tria valve?

A We had decided to move from Michigan, where I had lived our entire life, to Oregon, where our kids live, and I decided to have one last check-up with my cardiologist before we left. In that appointment, he told me my valve opening was down to 0.875 centimeters and I finally needed surgery. It got to the point where he could almost hear my valve problem without his stethoscope.

I have a very good cardiologist and he referred me to surgeons who were looking for the first candidate to get this Tria valve. Because I was relatively active and didn't have any other underlying issues, like diabetes, they felt I was a good candidate for the valve. They told me to read the website for the valve—Foldax.com—and after reviewing it, it seemed like the right thing for me.

A couple of things really stuck out to me. Other artificial valves are made of animal tissue, and after just five years, that tissue valve is already in decline. It's measurable. You will need to have another valve surgery to replace it at some point. My sister had mitral valve disease and had to have two heart valve surgeries—it was so difficult for her that she needed a third surgery and chose not to do it. She has passed on since. The Tria valve is made of a special polymer material that is stronger than animal tissue and is designed to last the rest of my life. That sounded good to me.

I also knew that the FDA had approved the valve to be studied in humans. In the past I'd worked for a defense contractor and had to deal with the federal government, and I knew they were very demanding and wouldn't have allowed that if it wasn't okay for use in patients.

Q How quickly did you return to an active life?

A I never really felt winded or anything after surgery, and it seemed like I adjusted pretty quickly to the new valve. I was in the hospital for a few days for them to study how I was doing after the surgery, and then two days after I went home, I went for a mile-and-a-half walk with my wife and older daughter. And it was in July in Michigan in the summer. It was probably in the 80s and very humid, and I was okay. It was really surprising because it was that quickly after the surgery.

We moved out to Oregon soon after and I started running again about a month or two after I got home. When I started running, I could run for maybe a minute and a half and I'd be tired. All that endurance I had built up before when I was running marathons was pretty much gone. I started back gradually, and my wife was really keeping an eye on me, wondering if I was going to go down. We did a 5K a few months after my surgery and we finished first in our age group.

Q What is your life like today, one year after the procedure?

A I'm really happy. It's nice not having that hanging over your head.

My life is very active and I run every day or every other day outside and I'm up to three or four mile runs again. I went back to the gym. I put on a few pounds during my recovery and I really want to get that off. I really think if I get the extra weight off, I'll be better than what I was before when I did the half-marathon.

Right after the procedure my resting heart rate was in the 80's, but now it's often in the 50's—I wear an Apple Watch so I see this all the time.

We do a lot of hiking here in Oregon and most of the hikes are pretty strenuous because there are so many hills. There are places to hike not too far from our house and we'll hike for maybe an hour or two. My wife and I both really like going out and seeing nature. There are quite a few national parks in our area—we're a 12-hour drive from Yellowstone and two-and-a-half-hours from Crater Lake, and we're really looking forward to visiting soon.

You know, one day it dawned on me—I don't have those chest pains anymore. They totally went away after the surgery and have never come back again.





Q What would you tell others about the Tria valve?

A Getting the valve was one of the best decisions I've ever made. If you need your aortic valve replaced and don't get a Tria valve, then probably several years down the line you're going to want to come back and get one. It seems to me that this valve is going to replace the tissue valve and the mechanical valve because it's better and less expensive than both of them.

ABOUT THE TRIA HEART VALVE

The Tria valve reimagines the heart valve by incorporating a new, proprietary biopolymer—LifePolymer™—with an innovative valve design intended to eliminate calcification, withstand stresses and strains without failure, and restore patient quality of life without lifelong use of blood thinners. Tria is also the first and only heart valve to be robotically manufactured, reducing variability, enabling high precision, repeatability, and quality, while substantially improving the economics of heart valve manufacturing.

[Learn more about the Tria heart valve at foldax.com](https://www.foldax.com)