



► Steve Clemmer, an area manager for the Vascular division based in Atlanta, getting some steps and playing soccer with his daughters.

Steps for a better life

Steve Clemmer on how his team took on a step challenge and improved their overall health

My dad almost died in 2020. One morning he was having trouble talking and my mom took him to Northeast Georgia Medical Center. The summer of 2020 was still during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, so she had to drop him off at the emergency department and go back home and hope he was okay.

Unfortunately, he was not okay. He had suffered a subdural brain hemorrhage that required emergency transportation to Emory University Hospital's intensive care unit (ICU). My mom would not see my dad again for over three weeks; most of that time he spent in the ICU. Our only communication with him was via calls that the nurses would help him make since he didn't know where he was or what was going on around him. We prayed for the best as we prepared for the worst. We even got my mom, who was quarantining 100%, to come stay with us so she would have support when the news came. I'll come back to this later.

I didn't start this article with a story about my personal situation to get sympathy. When my dad ended up in the ICU, and I talked to my Cook friends about it, I realized that we all had a stressful story about friends and family, some much more heart-wrenching than mine.

COVID-19 had shut down travel and social gatherings to the point most people weren't able to spend time with the most important people in their lives. People were experiencing high levels of stress in their personal lives. The job of a medical device salesperson is filled with stress in the best of circumstances. In 2020, COVID-19 impacted our ability to supply our customers with products reliably at a time when they needed products urgently.

One day toward the middle of 2021, I was talking with our Nashville-based Vascular Account Executive (VAE) **Kelly Bryant**. It was a typical call. We talked about the positives in the world around us while trying to navigate

the challenges. Kelly and I were discussing how the current environment of minimal human contact had taken some of the joy out of our lives. We felt like we were waking up, going to a different room to work, and then shutting down in time for dinner. It wasn't healthy, either physically or mentally. Kelly mentioned that she had only taken 14,000 steps that day. I have a FitBit and was at about 6,000 steps at that point. All of a sudden we were talking steps.

Around November, **Molly Cunningham** had posted a great Harvard Business Review article on mental health in the workplace on the Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DEI) Salesforce page. It illustrated the point that there has been an increase in mental health challenges in the workplace. Kelly and I both read the article and she called me. She said that she wanted to see if our team would be interested in doing a step challenge.

We didn't want anyone to feel like they had to participate, and Kelly did a great job gauging interest. To our pleasant surprise, all seven of the VAEs in the southeast area of the US wanted to participate. While I knew I was part of a competitive team, I got to see a new side of them when we were competing against each other. Let's just say that some of the smack-talking text messages were awesome.

All said and done, the team got over 2,500,000 steps in January 2022. We all felt better physically and mentally. Some of us accomplished personal weight loss goals, increased our cardiovascular conditioning, and lowered our stress levels. **Tom Emge**, our VAE for DMV, even raised over a thousand dollars for St. Jude by riding his bike 250 miles. We all benefited from the challenge, and for most of us, the new exercise routine was long enough to help us create new habits.

Our team highly recommends that you find a group who is interested in



▲ **Kelly Bryant**, a VAE based in Nashville.



▲ **Tom Emge**, a VAE for the DMV area.

improving their physical and mental health and start your own challenge.

For those of you who are still reading and wondering how my dad did during his stay in the ICU, thank you for your thoughts. My dad spent 12 days in the Emory University ICU, at a time when ICU beds were hard to come by. He spent another nine days in the hospital and in inpatient rehab. He had months of outpatient rehab to relearn things we all take for granted. I am beyond excited to tell you that he was able to spend the week of April 4, 2022, at the beach with my mom, his kids (my sister and I), our spouses, and his three grandkids. I hope that we can have many more years of trips and that my kids will get to know him the way I know him.

Now, please take a moment to look at your calendar and mark off some time to get some steps! You aren't just doing it for you!

• **Steve Clemmer** (*Steven.Clemmer@CookMedical.com*) is an area manager for the Vascular division based in Atlanta.

What's on your mind?

Do you have a life philosophy or personal strategies for well-being or happiness that you want to share? We want to hear about it! Send it to Angiogram@CookMedical.com.