



Interview with Shelli and Bill

Quick recap

The meeting began with introductions and casual conversation about personal matters before transitioning to the main focus of interviewing Shelli about her stroke experience in June 2021. Shelli shared her journey through hospitalization, recovery, and adaptation to life after her stroke, including her experiences with mobility aids and physical therapy. The group discussed various aspects of stroke recovery, including speech therapy, driving adaptations, and support systems, with participants sharing their own experiences and offering encouragement to each other.

Summary

AI Companion Project Interview

The meeting began with introductions and casual conversation, including updates on personal matters such as Walter's mother's heart attack and Amber Woods' stroke. Susan then confirmed she was recording the meeting and introduced Shelli, who was joined by her husband, Bill. The primary focus of the meeting was to conduct an interview with Shelli and Bill.

Stroke Experience During Race

Shelli shared her experience of having a stroke on June 6, 2021, while Bill and his friend Drew were preparing for an Appalachian Trail hike. She described how she had driven to Baltimore for a 10-mile race, which she completed successfully, but then experienced confusion while driving home, leading to a car accident involving hitting a pole and two cars. Despite her confusion, she



continued driving for another mile and a half before being stopped by police officers who discovered she had four flat tires.

Stroke Experience and Family Response

Shelli shared her experience of being taken to the hospital for evaluation after feeling unwell, despite her children's concerns. She decided to leave against medical advice, but later returned to the hospital after experiencing a stroke at home. Her children, who were present at the time, called for an ambulance, and she spent over a month in the hospital before being discharged on July 21st. Meanwhile, her husband Bill was hiking the Appalachian Trail and only learned about the situation when he received a message from a neighbor. Shelli mentioned that Bill turned around on the trail, came home, and spent as much time as possible in the hospital with her, despite the fact that it was in the middle of COVID, he was working full-time, and visiting hours were restricted. It was important to Shelli that her friends and family were with her during that time. She said her husband was (and still is) a godsend!

Post-Stroke Recovery and Lifestyle Adaptation

Shelli discussed her active lifestyle before her stroke, which included running, gym workouts, and yoga. She shared her hospital experience at Shady Grove, noting the good care but strict COVID-19 visitor policies. Her husband was present throughout her hospital stay, providing support and learning to assist with transfers. Shelli mentioned she can now perform most activities of daily living but still needs help with tasks like applying deodorant. She and Bill started the "All Weather Walking Club" to maintain a daily walking routine, even in adverse weather conditions.



Driving After Stroke: Adaptations and Experiences

The group discussed driving after a stroke or disability, with Roo sharing his experience of learning to drive with hand controls at Shady Grove after losing the use of his left hand. Shelli expressed interest in eventually driving again, particularly for local errands and social visits, and learned that Maryland allows disabled drivers with one arm, one leg, and one eye to drive. The discussion included practical advice about car adaptations, with Roo describing how he uses a spinner knob and extended signal stalk, and several participants shared their experiences of learning to transfer into cars and adjust to driving with disabilities.

Stroke Recovery and Support Strategies

The group discussed challenges faced by stroke survivors, with Shelli sharing her experience of adjusting to life after a stroke. She emphasized the importance of not discharging oneself too early from the hospital and advised leaning on family and friends for support. Layli asked about strategies for walking without a cane, and Shelli explained that she uses a gait belt with her husband's assistance, though they are working towards reducing dependence on it.

Mobility Device Choices and Experiences

The group discussed various assistive devices for mobility, with Shelli describing her use of a Hemi, a single-handled mobility aid, and a four-prong cane, depending on the situation. Susan offered to give away her unused scooter to Shelli, who expressed interest in exploring it. The conversation highlighted personal preferences and practical considerations when choosing mobility aids, with some participants emphasizing the importance of independence and others the need for adaptability in different settings.



Speech Therapy and Recovery Insights

The group discussed speech therapy and recovery after strokes, with Shin sharing his experience of having a stroke 10 months ago and struggling with speech. Several participants, including Shelli, Kristi, and Jeff, shared their own experiences with speech therapy, with Jeff noting that Shin's progress might not be visible to him but is significant compared to his initial state. The conversation concluded with encouragement from Jeff and others that Shin should not give up, as progress is being made despite the ongoing challenges.

Speech Therapy Techniques and Experiences

The group discussed speech therapy exercises and techniques, with Kellee sharing her experience of practicing phrases and word lists with her dog to improve her speech. Susan informed Shin about joining Slack, a communication platform, and mentioned a special channel for speech therapy meetings. The conversation concluded with Crystal sharing a story about her 11-year-old daughter using profanity during her brain surgery, demonstrating her strong personality.