

## Physician's Life Saved During Basketball Game

**Children's Hospital physician James Naprawa, MD, collapsed during a casual basketball game — but Kaiser Permanente players used their quick wits and a portable defibrillator to save his life. Pictured on the court, left to right, Kenneth Chen, MD; David Williams; Jorge Palza; James Naprawa, MD; Yu-Te Lee, MD; and Brian Chan, MD.**

One minute, James Naprawa, MD, was shooting some hoops with fellow physicians from neighboring hospitals. The next, he was waking after an [automated external defibrillator \(AED\)](#) shocked him back to consciousness.

In between, it was the quick action of a Kaiser Permanente medical assistant and physicians that saved Dr. Naprawa's life on July 16.

Months later, Dr. Naprawa is well enough to be biking to work and treating patients at Children's Hospital in Oakland. On December 10, he even resumed playing basketball.

"With medication, I'm close to being back to normal," said the busy pediatric emergency medicine physician.

### From Hiking to a Health Crisis

The basketball games have been organized by Jorge Palza, a medical assistant in the Medical Specialty Clinic at Kaiser Permanente Richmond, for about 5 years on Monday and Tuesday evenings at an Oakland gym.

Dr. Naprawa had played with the group a few times after being invited by [Brian Chan, MD](#), an Internal Medicine physician at the Richmond Medical Center and long-time friend. "We used to play basketball all of the time in medical school," said Dr. Naprawa.

Over the years Dr. Naprawa, 50, exercised and kept his weight down, but admitted his diet could have been better.

In early July he had hiked 10 miles alone up a 12,000 peak in Colorado and felt fine. But several days before the basketball game, Dr. Naprawa felt an unusual shortness of breath while riding his bike.

"I told myself that if I feel like this again, I will stop and go see a physician," he said. "I was very nervous before I played that night, and 5 minutes into the game I didn't feel right."

Dr. Naprawa collapsed among the other players, including [Yu-Te Lee, MD](#), a hospital medicine

physician at Kaiser Permanente Oakland, who attended to him; [Kenneth Chen, MD](#), a Richmond Medical Center nephrologist, who called 9-1-1; David Williams, the recreation center manager, who waited outside for the emergency team; and Palza, who quickly unpacked the AED he carries to each game, which was used several times to bring back Dr. Naprawa's pulse.

### **On the Road Back, There's Gratitude**

At Kaiser Permanente Oakland, the Cath Lab team led by [Ahmed Ijaz Shah, MD](#), jumped into action, inserting a stent and getting Dr. Naprawa stabilized in recovery. An EKG showed Dr. Naprawa had had a heart attack and had a complete blockage of his major heart artery.

Later, Dr. Naprawa was diagnosed with [cholesterol dyslipidemia](#), an abnormal level of cholesterol and other lipids in the blood that doesn't show up in a normal cholesterol panel.

Once released, he spent 6 weeks recovering poolside at his in-laws' house in Sacramento. "I can't tell you how wonderful it was. I was just happy to be alive. It was the most stress-free summer I had had since I was 10."

He now marvels that his heart attack didn't happen while he was alone on a mountain peak, but instead among fellow medical professionals who had the foresight to get an AED. "I really credit Jorge, Yu-Te, Ken, David, and the EMS team. They're all heroes."

"James would have died without the AED," said Dr. Chen. "I think AEDs should be available in all gyms."

Palza secured funding for the AED from Dave Leighton, Kaiser Permanente Richmond COO, as a safety precaution for the games "among a bunch of middle-aged guys," said Dr. Naprawa, who is effusive in his praise of Kaiser Permanente Oakland.

"Everyone who took care of me was incredible — the cardiologists, every doctor, every nurse, the people who served my meals — they were just wonderful. I really can't speak highly enough of the care I got."