

# Ricardo Garcia-Moreno: Living Proof That Learning CPR can Save Lives

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September 5, 2018 Ricardo Garcia-Moreno

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Haynes Boone Partner [Ricardo Garcia-Moreno](#) was lying on a stretcher, unable to talk or move as he went into full cardiac arrest the afternoon of Feb. 4, 2018. His heart had stopped beating for approximately 20 minutes, and he was not breathing when emergency medical personnel loaded him into an ambulance.

As Garcia-Moreno faded in and out of life over the next few hours, all he could think about were his wife, Ana, and their two sons – Emilio, 7, and Adrian, 5 – and how the boys would grow up without their dad if he died that Super Bowl Sunday.

But his will to live and fighting spirit, along with determination from several strangers who knew cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), kept him alive so he can be here today with his family.

Here is how Garcia-Moreno describes his experience:

He was enjoying time with his family and friends that February afternoon in Las Vegas. They were eating lunch at a restaurant called Joe's Las Vegas when he told his wife he felt dizzy.

"We were having a great time eating, having drinks and watching the Super Bowl, and I told my wife that I was feeling dizzy. Less than a minute later, I lost consciousness, and my head fell like a load of bricks on the table."

His sister-in-law saw the blank stare on his face and lunged over the table to help him, yelling for others to call 911. The wait staff came over and helped lower Garcia-Moreno to the floor, where a waiter, Rolando Ramirez, began administering CPR. Ramirez (shown in the photo below with Garcia-Moreno) happened to be a trained doctor from Cuba who had administered CPR to more than a dozen people during his tenure at the restaurant.

A doctor who was having lunch at Joe's came over to help, and then another medically trained person. Together, the three of them kept Garcia-Moreno alive for 15-20 minutes until the ambulance arrived. His heart had to be defibrillated five times – four times in the ambulance alone.

He regained consciousness in the ambulance and remembered hearing sirens and wearing an oxygen mask.

"I thought I had been run over while walking on the Vegas strip. But then I remembered we had been in a restaurant having dinner," he said. "I couldn't figure out when and how we left the restaurant and how I had been hit by a car. Nothing made sense."

## 48 hours

Garcia-Moreno lost consciousness again before being stabilized in the hospital Emergency Room, where two nurses prepped him for an angiogram.

“I heard two male nurses talking about me. I thought I was paralyzed because I could hear them clearly talking about me, but I couldn’t move, I couldn’t open my eyes and I couldn’t talk. I didn’t know it at the time, but I had been sedated and intubated. I thought I was dying. I thought my soul was detaching from my body, and I felt helpless,” he recalls.

“And then I became angry and thought to myself that I was going to fight to wake up. There was no way I was going to leave my family behind.”

Garcia-Moreno spent a week in the hospital recovering from the ordeal and had a defibrillator implanted in his chest.

### **Evangelist of CPR**

Unbeknownst to Garcia-Moreno, he had a genetic heart condition called Brugada Syndrome, which is characterized by abnormal electrocardiogram (ECG) findings and an increased risk of sudden cardiac death. He also learned that this condition had killed his grandfather when he was the same age as Garcia-Moreno, who was 48. For years, he and his family believed that his grandfather had died from a massive heart attack.

Garcia-Moreno considers it a miracle that he survived.

“God was looking after me and sent a lot of little angels, including the Good Samaritans at the restaurant, to help me survive,” he said. “If they hadn’t been there, I would not be here today.”

The experience changed Garcia-Moreno’s life in a number of ways. For one, he now evangelizes the importance of learning CPR. With the support of Haynes Boone, he helped arrange CPR training classes at the firm’s Houston office. About 60 employees were certified during the classes.

Garcia-Moreno hopes other Haynes Boone offices will follow suit.

“I know God has a purpose for me – foremost, to be a good husband and father and raise my boys to be good men. And, if along the way I can help or be a positive influence to others in their lives somehow, including by telling my story to others and encouraging them to take a CPR class, then I am fulfilling that purpose,” he said.

In addition, Garcia-Moreno is challenging Houston-area law firms to host CPR classes in October in conjunction with [Sudden Cardiac Arrest Awareness Month](#). He has also offered to speak to those firms as an ambassador for the cause.

### **Bystander behavior**

According to the American Heart Association (AHA), hundreds of thousands of Americans experience sudden cardiac arrest each year outside of the hospital – most in their own homes. About 90 percent of these incidents are fatal.

Appropriate bystander behavior can triple the chances of survival. However, CPR rates among bystanders are bleak. In Houston, for example, only 51 percent of people who suffer a sudden cardiac arrest receive CPR from bystanders. Houston has the best rate among Texas’ big cities, while Dallas has the worst rate, at 33 percent.

The AHA hopes to educate Texans about the importance of knowing CPR and symptoms of a heart attack with activities like [Heart Walks](#), which are taking place around the nation through November.

More than 30 Haynes Boone employees are registered to participate in a Heart Walk in downtown Dallas.

Garcia-Moreno's story also appeared in [Texas Bar Blog](#) and the [Houston Bar Bulletin](#).

