

In Her Survivor Era: Nurse and 'Swiftie' has Life Saved by Tulane Doctors

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Left: Ashley Pisano and her sister Catherine attended the Eras Tour in Tampa last year, a few months before Ashley experienced two life-threatening medical events in one day. Right: Ashley celebrates her 35th birthday after Tulane doctors saved her life twice. Her dog, Archer, is named after a Taylor Swift song.

Taylor Swift is bringing her massive Eras Tour to New Orleans this weekend, and she'll likely perform her latest anthem, 'I Can Do It with a Broken Heart.' Ashley Pisano, a surgical nurse and dedicated "Swiftie" will be singing along in the Superdome crowd Friday night.

No one, not even Taylor, knows more than Ashley about surviving a broken heart. The 34-year-old suffered a life-threatening brain aneurysm in December. She coded twice in the ambulance on the way to the emergency room at Tulane, and her health

continued to deteriorate. Tests revealed an aneurysm in her brain had started bleeding – an unexpected and catastrophic situation.

[Kendrick Johnson](#), MD, Cerebrovascular and Endovascular Neurosurgeon and Assistant Professor of Neurosurgery at Tulane University School of Medicine, sprang into action. Using a procedure that requires tremendous precision, he successfully threaded a metal wire the width of a human hair from the vessel near Ashley's groin to her brain, deploying a coil to prevent the aneurysm from bursting.

Ashley's family thought the worst was over. But, a few hours later, Ashley's heart got significantly weak due to a rare cardiac occurrence called severe stress cardiomyopathy, also known as "broken heart syndrome." [Asaad Nakhle](#), MD, Interventional Cardiologist and Assistant Professor in the Tulane Section of Cardiology, was called in at 2 a.m. and quickly assembled his team. Recognizing that Ashley's heart was failing, Dr. Nakhle placed her on a life-support machine (ECMO), which temporarily took over the functions of the heart and lungs.

The ECMO procedure carried high risks because of Ashley's brain bleed and the blood thinners she was on to treat the aneurysm, but it was her best chance for survival. By early the next morning, Ashley had survived two life-threatening medical conditions. The same expert care that saved Ashley's life is now available at East Jefferson General Hospital.

Recovery has taken time. Ashley couldn't stand, walk, or swallow when she first regained consciousness. A summer trip to see the Eras Tour in Scotland was canceled.

Following months of consistent physical and occupational therapy, Ashley can walk without assistance these days. Now fully in her 'Fearless' era, she's ready to celebrate with 70,000 fellow Swifties.

"I've been saying the whole time I don't know how I would have gotten through all this without Taylor Swift's music and my new puppy, Archer, who is named after a Taylor Swift song," she said. "The first thing I remember asking when I woke up was if I missed the Taylor Swift concert. It's now 10 months later, and I am so grateful, happy, and excited to be able to go to the Eras Tour with my sister this Friday!"