

Beat: Music

U.S. country music star Randy Travis regains consciousness after surgery

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USPA News - American country music star Randy Travis, who has sold more than 25 million records and won six Grammy awards for hits such as "Forever and Ever, Amen," remains in a critical condition but has regained consciousness after emergency surgery last week. Michael Mack, a cardiac surgeon and the medical director of cardiovascular disease at Baylor Health Care System in Dallas, said during a news conference on Monday that doctors now have a much clearer picture of what happened and Travis' current medical condition, which remains critical but has stabilized over the weekend.

"[The] operation was successful and Mr. Travis has awakened since that operation," Mack said. "He has what's called idiopathic cardiomyopathy, which means he has scarring of his heart muscle that is causing his heart to be weak and not able to support his circulation without help of either medical devices or medication." Doctors said Travis suffered an acute viral illness over the past three weeks which appears to have tipped over a more chronic condition. "We performed a biopsy of his heart muscle and it shows scar tissue. It does not show active infection," he said, adding that Travis has a family history of cardiomyopathy and there is no evidence it is related to drugs or alcohol abuse. Gary Erwin, an intensivist at The Heart Hospital Baylor Plano, said the country music star no longer requires any mechanical devices to support his heart but remains on intravenous medication for his heart. "We are decreasing the doses of those everyday and actually beginning to start him on oral medications which he will use long term to help support his heart," he said. Travis, 54, was rushed to the emergency room at Baylor Medical Center at McKinney in Texas on July 7 after suffering from complications of viral cardiomyopathy and congestive heart failure. He was listed in a critical condition and underwent placement of an IMPELLA peripheral left ventricular assist device for stabilization before being moved to The Heart Hospital Baylor Plano, located north of Dallas. Doctors had said on July 10 that Travis was showing signs of improvement, but his condition deteriorated just hours later when he suffered a stroke and required emergency surgery to relieve pressure on his brain. He was also placed on a ventilator and remains on that, although this support is being decreased. "He is breathing spontaneously with the help of the ventilator and hope to have him weaned off of that very soon, breathing completely on his own," Erwin said. He said Travis has responded well to the surgical procedure following the stroke, and scans have shown a decreased swelling of the brain. "He is awake and alert, interacting with his family and friends and beginning to start doing some early physical therapy," Erwin explained. "We do anticipate that he will need to stay here at The Heart Hospital for another two to three weeks to stabilize his heart during which time we will begin aggressive physical therapy." After Travis is discharged from The Heart Hospital Baylor Plano, which could happen as early as next month, doctors expect he will be transferred to an inpatient facility to receive intensive physical therapy. "We anticipate it will take months to recover from the stroke," he said. Mary Davis, who is engaged to Travis, thanked friends and family for the "outpouring of love and affection" that has been shown at the hospital and at their home. "I know that those are prayers that have helped mend his heart along with the skilled hands of the physicians and doctors and nurses here at The Heart Hospital of Baylor in Plano," she said. The fiancée added: "I know that Randy feels each and every one of those (prayers). He feels the hands of the doctors and the care of the nurses and the love of his fans. His friends and family have all been touched by that. He is responding well to voices and he sees and he understands. He's miles beyond where any of us thought he would be a few days ago." Early last week, prior to suffering the stroke and undergoing emergency surgery, Travis had thanked his fans for their love and support. Dr. William Gray, the director of cardiovascular services at Baylor Medical Center at McKinney, said Travis had been in "excellent health" until three weeks prior when he developed a viral upper respiratory illness. Travis, who has sold more than 25 million records during his 35-year-long career, is best known for hits such as "Three Wooden Crosses," "Forever and Ever, Amen," "Diggin' Up Bones," and "Deeper Than the Holler." He scored numerous awards, including six Grammy awards, and received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

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