



*“I’m just so glad to be alive and am in awe of the doctors and nurses at Regional West,” John said. “I could feel their compassion, even from behind their masks and face shields. I am so grateful to them for the care I received. For saving my life.”*

– John Aguiniga

On behalf of the Regional West Foundation board of directors, staff, and administration, I want to express my sincere thanks for your support of the Foundation during this most challenging of years in the field of healthcare.

Regional West’s physicians and staff continue to champion every patient in our regional service area, touching lives like John Aguiniga and his family daily.

Regional West is committed to continued excellence in patient care, expanded healthcare services, and broadened medical technology, because of generous donors like you who support the Foundation as we support Regional West’s greatest needs.

Please consider providing an investment in the future of local healthcare with a gift to Regional West Foundation. Each gift, regardless of amount, enables us to make a profound and positive difference in the health of our community.

Sincerely,  
John Massey | Chair  
Foundation Board of Directors

Before contracting COVID-19, 55-year old Kimball, Nebraska resident John Aguiniga was the picture of health and vitality.

“I was never sick, and had never spent a day in the hospital,” he said. “I thought I was invincible.”

As Regional West’s first COVID-19 patient, treatment worldwide was still fairly experimental when John was admitted to the hospital on March 28. Brennan Mosch, MD, a hospitalist at Regional West Physicians Clinic-Hospitalist Service, was one of the physicians caring for John during his hospitalization.

“In medicine, we’re used to years of thorough research and controlled studies to know how to treat disease,” said Dr. Mosch. “Because this is a new virus, unfortunately there is still no tried and true treatment.”

John remembers being sedated prior to being hooked up to a ventilator that afternoon, but has no recollection of the following 11 days as physicians fought to save his life. They first tried a combination of hydroxychloroquine and zithromax, since some COVID-19 patients respond favorably to the drugs. John’s condition, however, continued to worsen.

“He was basically on the brink of death; we knew he would die if we didn’t do something in the next day or two,” said Dr. Mosch.

After consulting with Joseph Hong, MD, and Saed Awadallah, MD, pulmonologists at Regional West Physicians Clinic-Pulmonology, Critical Care, they gave John a medication called tocilizumab (actemra). Typically used in the U.S. to treat rheumatoid arthritis, it had been selectively implemented with some success in China and Italy to treat critical COVID-19 patients by modulating the immune system.

Within 24 hours, his lab results and inflammatory markers showed signs of improvement, and he began the slow but steady road to recovery. Seventeen days after being admitted to Regional West, John was dismissed, breathing on his own with no supplemental oxygen.

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