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National

'It Was A Tremendous Day': Routley Family Celebrates Medical Breakthrough AM980 News

Hamilton

11/14/2012

Toronto

It's a beacon of hope for the family of a man who has been in a vegetative state for 12 years.

Winnipeg

Scott Routley suffered severe brain damage after a car crash and the 39-year-old has been in a vegetative state ever since.

Edmonton

Because of his condition, doctors weren't even sure if he was in any pain, or whether he still had any residual brain activity.

Calgary

But a medical breakthrough announced Tuesday at Western University has answered those questions.

Vancouver

A functional MRI scan of Routley's brain showed activity in certain regions in response to different scenes he was asked to imagine.

World

One of those questions had to do with whether Routley was in pain, his response indicated he wasn't.

Business

Experts say the brain function proves beyond a shadow of a doubt that Routley was answering his doctors' questions with his brain.

Entertainment

Scott's father Jim Routley spoke exclusively with AM980's McArthur in the Morning on Wednesday. He said the family is glad to know Scott isn't in any pain and he's sure his son would be happy to know he's helping others by participating in the research.

Sports

"I know he would be very, very satisfied," Routley said.

Sports

Routley said the news from the medical team at Western confirms what the family has believed all along.

London Weather

"There have been times when we thought about whether we were doing the right thing, whether we should have taken a different course. But now this just vindicates what we've felt all along is true, that Scott is there and he would like nothing better than to communicate."

7 Day Forecast

Routley says they've noticed other signs that Scott is able to understand them, like blinking his eyes in response to questions and even giving them the thumbs-up.

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As for the potential dilemma this discovery could pose for families with loved ones on life support, Routley admits it could complicate things.

School Cancellations

"It may help them if he could indicate his wishes, but as it stands right now research has to go a lot farther and have the MRIs available to these families so that they can communicate with their loved ones."

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Dr. Loreena Naci is a member of Scott Routley's medical team and spoke on The Pulse with Devon Peacock on AM980 Wednesday.

She said the findings about Routley's brain activity could lead to better patient care for those in vegetative states, even allowing them to make decisions about their medical treatments.

Naci says they'll be able to tap into Western's other departments to form an interdisciplinary group that can tackle ethical questions surrounding that idea.

She said that will likely involve colleagues at the Rotman Institute of Philosophy and medical neurologists at University Hospital.

"What we need to think about is what kind of capacities does a patient need to indicate to us in the (scan), which questions should we ask them to ascertain they are of sound mind and they're capable of making some decisions that would enable them to participate in their clinical care," Naci said.

"We think that's of utmost importance because it really influences the quality of life that the patient can have."

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