

Margate & Coconut Creek The Forum

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Margate doctor busts clots with new system, saves lives

Marathon runner benefits from this new technique.

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When he first arrived at the Northwest Medical Center in Margate, Dr. William Julien did not know what to expect. Every patient has a different condition, but 43-year-old Martha Letual's could have been deadly. But Julien's innovative way of using new technology with traditional medicine may have saved her life.

"I had never seen a clot this big dissolve," he said.

Letual, of Coral Springs, arrived at the hospital with massive blood clots, some of which had broken and

traveled to her lungs. Although blood-clotting medication is usually used to treat the condition known as deep vein thrombosis, Julien saw her condition was much more serious, and something had to be done immediately, he said.

"She had massive clots in her inferior vena cava vein and iliac vein," he said.

He implanted a new, tiny retrievable Vena Cava Filter, which catches traveling clots before they threaten the lungs and heart. The retrievable filter is a new product on the market. Prior to this retrievable device, filters were installed permanently.

Then, Julien put a catheter inside the clots and injected clot-busting agents with a machine called an Angiojet, also

known as the power-pulse spray technique.

Dr. Steven M. Tidwell, an interventional (non-invasive) radiologist practicing in Palm Beach Gardens, has also used this type of thrombolytic therapy. "It's an effective procedure," he said.

Tidwell said this technique is not well known because it is rarely publicized.

For Letual, it was a completely surprising experience.

A marathon runner, Letual said she thought her blood was circulating perfectly before she woke up one morning and saw her leg was twice its normal size.

"I couldn't even stand up," she said. "It was pretty bad."

Letual began experi-

encing problems weeks earlier after she had returned from her trip to Maine.

First, she had back pain, which was gone after some physical therapy, then she experienced chest pain, which after seeing a doctor went away slowly.

She was starting to feel fine when her leg became swollen overnight.

"Dr. Julien was amazed to see how big it was," she said. "Once I was there and he explained everything, it was very comforting."

Letual ended up staying at the hospital for 14 days, and was on blood thinners for the next six months. "This goes to show that you just never know what

can happen to you," she said.

She has gone back to running marathons and said she feels better than ever.

She has run two, half marathons since her recovery.

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