

Miracle Recovery: Health City Cayman Islands Saves Irish Vacationer's Life in Dramatic Barbados ECMO Rescue

GRAND CAYMAN, CAYMAN ISLANDS, April 18, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- What began as a mild respiratory infection during a family vacation in Barbados nearly turned fatal for 57-year-old Irish tourist Gail Dalton.

Thanks to the rapid intervention of the specialized emergency team at Health City Cayman Islands and the hospital's Extracorporeal Membrane Oxygenation (ECMO) capability, Dalton survived bronchitis and severe pneumonia linked to COVID-19, along with life-threatening complications affecting her brain, liver and kidneys, and critically low oxygen levels.

Dalton, a previously healthy woman from Ireland, became ill while vacationing in Barbados with her husband, Mark. What initially appeared to be a cold quickly worsened. She was admitted to Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Bridgetown, where doctors diagnosed rapidly progressing pneumonia.

Her oxygen saturation fell into the 60s despite maximum ventilator support, and her blood pressure plummeted, requiring multiple lifesaving infusions.

With local resources exhausted, the health insurance company reached out to Health City Cayman Islands, which had previously assisted in a similar critical case. A specialized team led by Dr. Binoy Chattuparambil, Clinical Director at Health City, along with Chief of Anaesthesiology Dr. Dhruva Krishnan and a team of medical experts, flew by air ambulance to Barbados that night.

Upon arrival in the ICU, Dalton's oxygen saturation stood at 62 percent, and her blood pressure and heart rate were critically unstable. The team immediately initiated ECMO — inserting cannulas through a small incision below the right collarbone and a puncture in the groin. Within hours, her oxygen levels rose to 100 percent and her blood pressure improved.



Gail Dalton

The next morning, the team safely transferred Dalton on ECMO via air and ground ambulances — a complex four-and-a-half-hour journey — to Health City’s ICU in the Cayman Islands. She remained on ECMO for approximately 10 days while her lungs recovered from the severe infection. She required short-term dialysis as her kidneys recovered, and her liver function returned to normal. After three weeks at Health City, Dalton walked out of the hospital and eventually returned home to Ireland with no lasting organ damage.

“The doctors have been wonderful,” Gail Dalton said. “I don’t think I’d be here without [them and the staff].”

Her husband, Mark, described the ordeal as emotionally and physically exhausting. “If it wasn’t for Health City, she would have passed away,” he said, noting that he had begun considering funeral arrangements at one stage. “What they’ve done, in my opinion, is nothing short of a miracle.”

Dr. Binoy highlighted the case as an example of the life-saving potential of timely, advanced care in the Caribbean.

“Gail’s story underscores why rapid access to specialized interventions like ECMO matters when minutes count,” he said. “Her lungs, kidneys and liver all recovered fully. She is back to normal life — a powerful reminder of what is possible with the right technology and expertise.”

Health City Cayman Islands is the Caribbean’s first center to offer ECMO, an advanced form of life support that functions as an artificial heart and lung — oxygenating blood and removing carbon dioxide outside the body while allowing damaged organs to rest and heal. Since introducing the capability in 2017, the hospital has established itself as a regional referral center for complex critical care cases that exceed the resources available at many regional hospitals.

The hospital, a Joint Commission International-accredited tertiary care facility, serves both local and Caribbean residents as well as international patients seeking high-quality, affordable advanced care. Its emergency and critical care services — including 24/7 capabilities and rapid air ambulance coordination — position it as a preferred medical destination in the Caribbean when time is critical.

“Cases like Gail Dalton’s demonstrate Health City’s role as more than a local hospital — we are a lifeline across the region for patients facing the most serious medical emergencies,” Dr. Binoy stated.

Dalton and her husband have expressed gratitude to the entire Health City team, as well as for the convenient neighboring accommodations at Parrot Ridge, described by Mark as “a blessing” that allowed him to remain close to his wife during the ordeal.

The couple indicated they plan to return to the Cayman Islands for a future visit — this time to thank their caregivers in person rather than as patients.

About Health City Cayman Islands

Health City Cayman Islands (HCCI) is a medically advanced tertiary hospital with locations in East End and George Town in Grand Cayman. The brainchild of internationally-renowned heart surgeon and humanitarian Dr. Devi Shetty, it features a unique model of health care, built with a focus on the patient and rooted in innovative business models that allow the delivery of high quality, affordable care. A member of the Narayana Health network, HCCI is the first hospital in the Caribbean and one of only six organizations globally to receive the prestigious Joint Commission International (JCI) Enterprise Accreditation. For more information visit: www.healthcitycaymanislands.com.

Dr. Karen Springer, Medical Advisor
Marketplace Excellence
+1 201 861-2056
[email us here](#)

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