

## **TRANSCRIPT OF PATIENT BOBBY WALKER'S ER MONOLOGUE:**

(patient stops frequently during his story to breathe, O2 nasal cannula, coughs, appears hypoxic)

Hello, my name is Bobby Walker. I can't believe how life has changed over the last few years. If you'd asked me if it was possible to experience the things me and my family have when I'm only 41 years old, I would've said you're crazy. I never imagined I'd be sitting where I am today.

At this very moment, I'm sitting in the ER on oxygen. I thought it was just my asthma acting up but now the doctors are talking about COPD. I was out on a run training for a Couch to 5K when I got really short of breath. Because of that I fell and busted my wrist and some teeth, not to mention it's hard to talk because the teeth that fractured when I fell pushed through my lip. Brianne, my wife, had to bring me here to the ER. I can't believe they want me to get evaluated for COPD! That's for old people!

And all this other stuff, too. The busted wrist, foot pain, knee pain, low back pain, the hard time hearing. You'd think I was a hundred years old! That's what all that smoking did to me. Noah tried to tell me. But I wouldn't listen.

Oh how I miss my boy. That's why I was training for the Couch to 5K. Noah was the only child me and Brianne had. He died in April last year during an Army training accident when the chopper he was in crashed, killing all on board. He'd been after me for years to quit smoking. When he died last year, I finally quit smoking and instead started chewing tobacco. And I wanted to honor my son's memory by getting healthier, and training for this 5K in October.

If you've never suffered the loss of your child, you can't begin to know how much it hurts. That kind of pain never goes away. And not just for me and Brianne. Noah's wife Ella is a nurse and she and my three-year-old grandson, Ty, live a couple of hours away in St. Louis. We don't get to see them much. She's so busy with work and taking care of Ty on her own, she's got all she can handle. She tries to visit when she can but it's not often. And we try to get there for their birthdays and such. She's not interested in leaving St. Louis, and Brianne and I need to stay here for my railroad job.

And if I can't get my health back, what's this going to do to my job? I love my job as a railroad engineer. And I'm the only paycheck in our household because Brianne, who teaches high school chorus, was diagnosed with some sort of vocal fold issue, they call it, and she's been out on unpaid medical leave for almost six months. We're not sure when she'll be cleared to go back to work. She loved singing in the church choir and teaching it in school and between that and losing Noah, she's been really depressed, and it puts a strain on us. And she gets angry with me when I ask her to repeat something because I couldn't understand what she said the first time, her voice can be so hard to understand. She tells me it's not her voice; I'm just hard of hearing.

I've already lost my son. I can't lose my wife, too. We've taken too many hits already. I've got to be strong for Brianne. And for myself. And I've got to complete this 5K run. It's the least I can do to honor Noah's memory.