

## **A Woman with Hypothermia Survives After More Than 6 Hours in Cardiac Arrest**

“It is an exceptional case worldwide” explained one of the doctors that saved Audrey Mash. The woman was lost in the Girona Pyrenees and was revived in the Vall d’Hebron hospital in Barcelona.

“I don’t remember anything from that weekend”, affirmed Audrey Mash, the 34-year-old British woman that was revived after more than 6 hours in cardiac arrest. The woman that was connected during that time to a machine that permitted her to continue living, was lost together with her husband on November 3<sup>rd</sup> in the mountainous area of Vall de Nuria, in the Girona Pyrenees. At midday Audrey, English professor in Barcelona, suffered severe hypothermia caused by the cold (a snowstorm surprised them), became unconscious and entered cardiorespiratory arrest.

Six hours later, after the rescue, she was revived in the hospital of Vall d’Hebron thanks to the coordination between the teams of firemen, the Emergency Medical Service (EMS) and the hospital staff. “It is an exceptional case worldwide; the largest documented case of cardiac arrest in Spain”, Doctor of Intensive Medicine and member of the ECMO team (extracorporeal membrane oxygenation machine) Eduard Argudo, explained Thursday morning from Vall d’Hebron.

Thanks to various steps -phone calls and photographs received by friends of the couple- the firemen managed to reach the area around 3:40pm. The woman, in that moment had a body temperature of 18 degrees Celsius, was then transported to the Vall d’Hebron hospital in a medical helicopter. Upon arrival at the health center, at 5:45pm, the patient received treatment from the extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO, the machine that supplies the function

of the heart and the lungs, drawing blood that is oxygenated before reintroducing it through an artery, and that also warms it, allowing the body temperature to elevate.)

When Audrey Mash arrived at the hospital, she did not have vital signs, her heart did not have electrical activity and her kidneys and lungs were not working. The medical professionals considered, nevertheless, that the patient could survive dealing with the hypothermia and decided to connect her to the machine. When her body reached 30 degrees Celsius, (when she arrived at the hospital it was at 20.2 degrees Celsius) the doctors decided to give her an electric shock using a defibrillator to revive her and were successful. Her heart began beating at 9:46pm.

“This case marks the line of the future: the coordination between teams”, affirmed the Fireman Chief of Special Divisions, Miguel Lopez, this morning in a press conference. These coordinating forces have a key impact: without them there is no professional capable of dealing with cases like this”, added Antoni Encinas, manager of intensive medical services and concluded by saying “The goal is that Audrey’s case will be the norm and not an exception”. During her admission at the hospital, the doctors induced the patient into a mild hypothermic state for 24 hours to protect her brain and ignore her current state. “We are especially concerned about the possible neurological consequences”, explained Dr. Argudo, “Since there practically doesn’t exist any cases of people that have been revived after having the heart stop for so much time.

The woman doesn’t present any neurological pain today, she is practically recovered and lives a normal life, except for sensitivity and movement in her hands, that remain affected by the cold.

The husband of the patient, Rohan Schoeman, gave details about the excursion: “We went to spend the weekend with friends. On Sunday we decided to leave at 7:15am without them. It got to a point that the snow became very intense. We found a rock and we tried to use it for shelter to

avoid the weather conditions. When we had visibility, I realized that our friends had tried to contact us. Audrey was losing consciousness, so I tried to send pictures to our friends of where we were”, said Schoeman.

“I didn’t realize that my life was in danger until I woke up here”, said the patient, that left the hospital 11 days later. The British woman has said that she passed the first days in the hospital “without knowing very well what was happening”. Since they discharged her, she said, she has been informed about the consequences of hypothermia. “It’s incredible that I have survived. I am happy”, she expressed in a press conference celebrated this Thursday at the Vall d’Hebron hospital. “The attention has been fantastic”. Despite the experience, Audrey Mash hopes to return to the mountain within a year. “Maybe we were not as prepared as we should have been, we were foolish”, concluded Mash.