

Back From The Brink

Compliments of: [Tina Pttaway](#)

Every year, thousands of Canadians go into sudden cardiac arrest – their hearts simply stop beating. The vast majority die. But for more than a decade, hypothermia has been a proven method of treating patients whose hearts have stopped functioning.

If a heartbeat is reestablished, doctors can bring down the surviving patient's body temperature by 5 degrees Celsius, and leave them in a chilled state for 24 hours. Then, they slowly warm the patients to normal temperature, and bring them out of their induced coma. What they are discovering is that patients who are chilled have far better outcomes than those patients who are revived from their cardiac arrest but not given access to hypothermic treatment; fewer patients are dying or suffering long-term irreversible damage such as brain damage.

In this documentary that I produced for CBC Radio's The Current we meet Bill MacDonald, a cardiac arrest survivor, and his devoted friend Ferdy Rochas. And we also meet the talented team of doctors and researchers at St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto, and at Life Recovery Systems in New Jersey who are doing much to improve the outcomes of patients like Bill.

This documentary received the World Gold Medal at the 2009 New York Festivals in the Health and Medical category.