

Center for Rehabilitation Medicine

Back in the Groove



Richard “Steelo” Vazquez with his wife Penelope and son Elijah. Below: In past years, he performed on many stages, including “Dancing with the Stars.”



You may have seen Richard “Steelo” Vazquez grooving on “Dancing with the Stars” or onstage with Madonna or Gwen Stefani. But perhaps his most triumphant performance came after he suffered a ruptured brain aneurysm that left him unable to speak, walk and dance.

“He was doing a head spin when he had the first rupture,” says Steelo’s wife Penelope, also a dancer. At first, he thought it was a pinched nerve, but the pain intensified with light, sound and even while holding his 10-month-old son Elijah. When he fell unconscious at church a few days later (a second rupture), he was rushed to the hospital.

Steelo underwent emergency surgery, and was later transferred to the **Center for Rehabilitation Medicine’s Acute Rehabilitation Unit** at Northridge Hospital Medical Center. There he received Rehabilitation Nursing, and Physical, Occupational and Speech Therapies under the direction of **Joel Rosen, MD**, Physiatrist.

The first milestone came when Steelo began feeding himself again. Another milestone came after music was incorporated into Steelo’s therapy. “I came in one day and he was dancing with the nurses,” recalls Penelope. “It was the first time we caught a glimpse of his old self.”

Steelo is still receiving outpatient therapy, and continues to make progress. In fact, five months after he was discharged from the Center for Rehabilitation Medicine, he gave a victorious performance on “Dancing with the Stars” that brought tears to the eyes of his fellow performers and Penelope who watched in the audience with Elijah. “It’s great seeing him doing what he loves,” she says.

To learn more about the Center for Rehabilitation Medicine, please call 818-700-5648 or visit www.NorthridgeHospital.org/rehab.