



KEVIN O'Flynn was a fit, healthy 34-year-old.

He enjoyed running and playing soccer, playing five-a-side with friends and work colleagues at least once a week.

And like many young men who lead active lives, the subtle signs that something could be wrong gave no immediate cause for worry. When he started to feel more tired than usual during the weekly kick-about, he put it down to getting older. The palpitations he was having at night, the ones that sometimes kept him awake, were cast aside as a side effect of drinking too much coffee.

Then, on July 27th, 2015, half way through a soccer game in his hometown of Fermoy, Kevin collapsed on the pitch. Ten days later, surrounded by his family, he passed away in Cork University Hospital. Kevin died from a Sudden Cardiac death as a result of an undiagnosed heart condition called Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy.

**“There was absolutely no history of this in the family,” said his brother Shane.**

**“It came as such as shock because he was extremely active and very healthy. We could not believe this had happened to our family.”**

In trying to understand what had happened to his younger brother, Shane's internet search brought him to CRY Ireland. The charity offers cardiac assessment, counselling and bereavement support services to those affected by cardiac conditions or to those that have lost a loved one to sudden cardiac death.

“When this happens to someone you love it's just absolute disbelief,” said Shane.

“You are trying to figure out, ‘Why did this happen? how could this happen to such a fit guy?’ You are searching for information and answers its only now, through CRY that I can understand exactly how it can happen. It happens to so many people. There are people out there now and people who will be reading this that possibly have a heart condition and they don't even know it.”

In June last year, Danish footballer Christian Eriksen collapsed during Denmark's opening Euro 2020 game with Finland and needed to be resuscitated on the pitch. Erikson made a full recovery and had a cardioverter defibrillator implanted. Shane said the incident bore striking similarities to what happened to Kevin.



**Shane O' Flynn (left) with his brother Kevin.**

“It was exactly the same situation,” he said.

“The difference was that that Erikson had doctors, paramedics, defibrillators and everyone around him. It was amazing to see. With Kevin, unfortunately those people were not around him and the lads that were with him were in total shock. It took about 10 to 15 minutes to get a defibrillator to him from a nearby leisure centre. He was able to keep going for ten days in hospital and we take solace from having that time with him. We were able to say goodbye.”

CRY Ireland strongly recommends that cardiac assessments are carried out for those families who are affected by Sudden Cardiac Death.

“At the time we weren't aware that CRY offered the screening service, so we got ours done privately,” said Shane.

“Thankfully the screening didn't show anything unusual, and it gave us piece of mind. I know that the screening service CRY runs in Tallaght has provided the same piece of mind for other families.”

Since contacting Kevin's death, the O 'Flynn family have raised thousands of euros through fundraising in his name. The money was used to purchase the first defibrillator for the town of Fermoy, where Kevin grew up.

**“It's charities like CRY that help raise awareness of sudden cardiac death,” said Shane.**

**“Kevin was young, fit and healthy but he had a condition he didn't know about. For us as a family, we want to do all we can to prevent another death like Kevin's. It's the way we honour his memory.”**