Cardiac “Huggy” Pillow
Construction Instructions

For the pattern, use a legal-sized (8 ½” x 14”) sheet of paper, and draw a half-heart to fill the sheet, which results in a pillow that is a good size for chest compression when the pillow is hugged. Fold the fabric along the straight-of-grain and place the straight edge of the pattern on the fold. Use either a rotary cutter to cut the fabric by following with the blade along the edge of the pattern, or trace the pattern with a fine-tip marker and cut with scissors, being careful not to let the fabric shift as you cut. With frugal cutting, one yard of fabric will yield 3 complete hearts. You can get another two half-hearts from the remaining fabric. You can combine compatible fabrics, sewing the left-over half-hearts from two companion fabrics with a seam down the middle, making the two sides of another pillow. Remember when you cut these half-hearts to try to keep the straight edge of your pattern on the straight- of-grain, and to add a seam allowance to the straight edge. In this way you will get two sides of another pillow out of every two yards of fabric. If your group has quilters who strip piece, you can also create fabric from strips left over from other projects.

For material, use quilt quality cotton fabrics because they handle and wash well. Often patients have nausea and vomiting due to the anesthesia, and when they begin to eat again. More men than women will need these pillows, so try to stay with neutral fabric choices. To include a strap of some kind so the patients can hang on to them more easily, machine sew the seam around the contour of the heart, and insert a folded piece of an 18” cut of 1/4 or 3/8 inch grosgrain ribbon into the seam at the side of the heart. It lets the pillow hang from the wrist like a camera on a strap. In addition to fabric and ribbon, you will need sewing thread (stick to shades of grays and they can be used for almost any color fabric) and hand sewing needles to close the seam after the pillow is stuffed. Select a polyester fiberfill that is more resilient and won’t bunch. Fill the pillows firmly, so they will provide good support when compressed. Being very frugal with your materials, you should plan for the cost of the pillows to be approximately $2-$2.50 each.

When sewing the heart, remember to place right sides of the fabric together, and to leave about 3 inches open for turning and stuffing. Layering and pressing the fabric together before sewing will keep the fabric from shifting or sliding without the need to pin. Sew the seam, leaving about 4 inches open for turning and stuffing the pillow. Backstitching at the beginning and end of your sewing will ensure that the pressure of stuffing doesn't unstuff
your seam. Sewing toward the point, start with a backstitch about two inches from the point and continue around the heart to within about 6 inches of the starting stitch. In this last inch or so, before you reach the stuffing opening, insert your ribbon with the loop inside the partially sewn pillow. Stack the cut ends of the ribbon and align the cut edges along the edge of your heart fabric, and finish sewing to the beginning of the opening with a backstitch. Return to the area where the ribbon was inserted and apply another few stitches in the seam allowance to reinforce the ribbon.

Before turning the sewn heart right-side out, clip the cleavage of the heart seam up to the stitching line, and snip off the tip of the heart point within about 1/8 inch of the sewing line. Either snip the seam up to the stitch line every inch or so around the curved lobes of the heart, of use a pinking shear around the curve within 1/8 inch of the sewn line. This will minimize bulk in the seam fabric, and allow the fabric to ease and stretch around the contour of the heart when it is turned right-side out.

Turn the heart right-side out. Stuff through the open seam, being careful to fill each lobe and the point, and ease the fiberfill so the fabric lays smoothly over it. Finger press a crease into the fabric at the stuffing opening where the seam line will be. Holding the fabric together, sew into the finger-creased seam line to close the opening.