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Monaghan Shopping Centre security staff Alison O'Dwyer and John McEnroe demonstrate the defibrillator.

Picturo: John McAviney

## Heart attack victims 'safer in supermarket'

by Patrick Tierney and Anne Hayden

IF you have a heart attack in Monaghan it would be safer to go to the local supermarket rather than the hospital for treatment, according to the local protest group.

Staff at Monaghan Shopping Centre have been trained to use a defibrillator machine, while the local hospital remains 'off call' for emergencies. Ironically, the Monaghan Hospital Alliance said it may now be safer to be treated at the shopping centre rather than the hospital.

"At least you'd have on the spot treatment there

rather than ending up like Benny McCullagh," said Monaghan Hospital Alliance representative Mick McNally.

Mr McCullagh suffered a heart attack 500 yards from Monaghan Hospital last month but died in the ambulance on the 45km journey to Cavan Hospital because under North Eastern Health Board (NEHB) regulations he could not be admitted at Monaghan. The hospital is 'off call', meaning patients who arrive by ambulance cannot be admitted.

"If he'd arrived by car he'd have been admitted and got the best of treat-



Benny McCullagh: died 500 yards from Monaghan hospital.

ment," said Mr McNally.

The shopping centre's on-site defibrillator machine

will aid heart attack victims and help to resuscitate them with electronic pulses. All security staff have been trained to use the machine by the NEHB Ambulance Service and there will always be staff available in an emergency to use it when the premises is open.

More than 80,000 people pass through the shopping centre on an average week.

Monaghan Hospital Alliance welcomed the new development but said it highlighted the fact that Monaghan had been neglected by Government ministers.

"It's good to see something being put into the

area rather than being taken away," said Mr McNally.

Monaghan GP Dr Ilona Duffy also welcomed the new machine but warned that it would not solve the problems that Mr McCullagh had faced.

"While it's great to see these machines, the person still needs to get to a hospital for treatment and there are still the same problems with getting them to the hospital," she said.

Centre manager Oliver Martin denied that the present crisis at the nearby Monaghan General Hospital had any influence on the decision to install the machine.