

# FACES OF AMR PROFILE STORIES



## Mary Millard

***“Taking antibiotics is something I have to live with for the rest of my life. I can either accept the lemons or make lemonade. I try as much as I can to get out there and talk about it and raise awareness to address and prevent antibiotic resistance.”***

Mary Millard is a former nurse who always lived an active and healthy life, taking care of patients and enjoying spending time with her family and friends. Until a surgery to correct an aortic aneurism – a life-threatening condition – changed the course of Mary’s life forever.

Ahead of the scheduled surgery, Mary suffered cardiac arrest and was put on extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO), a form of life support. Her surgery was delayed two weeks and she had been at the hospital a total of three weeks before she got some more bad news. Doctors discovered that she had contracted *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* (P. aeruginosa), an infection that caused Mary to go into septic shock. The infection was discovered through a routine CBC lab test. This meant another surgery and an extended stay at the hospital.

Her care team performed an additional surgery to clean up the area. The bacterium, however, had attached itself to the artificial parts put into her body when Mary was put on life support and had formed a biofilm, which is a very difficult infection to treat.

While she does not remember much of her time in the hospital, Mary will never forget meeting with an infectious disease doctor about three months after she suffered her cardiac arrest. He delivered the news: Mary would need to take antibiotics for the rest of her life. He told her that P. aeruginosa infections don’t go away. To make matters more complicated, P. aeruginosa is resistant to many standard antibiotics.

Mary remains on antibiotics and, over the years, the bacteria overrode a lower dose before doctors put Mary on the highest dose allowed by the FDA. In turn, this results in joint and muscle pain along with tendon problems and restricting her activities. It’s also meant lots of x-rays, CT scans, and countless hospital and physician visits.

Fast forward more than six years and, today, Mary is a vocal advocate who frequently shares her story nationally and globally. Though she struggled physically and emotionally for about a year after her diagnosis, Mary is determined to raise awareness and inspire others to tell their story so that more can be done to address and prevent antibiotic resistance.

