

# FACES OF AMR PROFILE STORIES



## Peggy Lillis

***“My mom was a healthy 56-year-old woman. She had gone the day before to the dentist to have an abscess removed and was prescribed an antibiotic. Something that could have been so easily prevented, if we had just known, if people had been educated, if the person who prescribed that drug had been educated. She didn’t need something that strong.”***

A routine visit to the dentist for Peggy Lillis triggered a tragic, rapid chain of events that led to her untimely death. On a Tuesday in 2010, Peggy had a root canal and the dentist prescribed an antibiotic to treat an abscess. Within two days, she started feeling uncharacteristically ill and had to miss work – something she almost never did.

Peggy spent the weekend in bed with what she thought was a stomach virus. Her doctor prescribed anti-diarrhea medicine and recommended Peggy see a GI doctor on Monday. Her symptoms didn’t improve and exactly one week from the day of her dentist appointment, Peggy was taken to the hospital. There, emergency room physicians determined that Peggy had a massive infection. The infection was later determined to be caused by clostridium difficile, or C. diff., which was brought on by antibiotic use.

At the hospital, Peggy received fluid and antibiotic therapy. Because Peggy was in shock, her family had to step in to make medical decisions. Doctors started a central line, performed additional blood tests, scheduled Peggy for a CT scan and performed a colonoscopy to determine if she had an obstruction. She was sedated and intubated to make sure her airway wasn’t compromised during the procedures. Doctors continued treating Peggy with IV antibiotics and other drugs and planned a surgery to remove her colon in an attempt to save her life.

That is when the realization hit her family that what they initially thought was the flu only a few days before could ultimately cost Peggy her life. While Peggy did survive the surgery to remove her colon, her vital signs started to deteriorate soon after the surgery, and Peggy passed away in the evening due to sepsis.

Today, Peggy’s sons and a growing movement of C. diff survivors and caregivers carry on her legacy through the [Peggy Lillis Foundation](#) and uses their heartbreaking experience to advocate for more and better education around proper antibiotic use. They don’t want others to live through a nightmare battle with a preventable infection and are building power to end harm caused by healthcare-associated antibiotic-resistant infections.

