

# FACES OF AMR PROFILE STORIES



## Laura Kusisto

*“In the two weeks since I had given birth, I had developed a racing heartbeat, lost 20 pounds and become too weak to change a diaper before doctors detected that something was seriously wrong.”*

Bringing home a newborn baby can be stressful enough for a first-time mom. Add to it an infection for the mother, and the situation can become life-threatening. That’s exactly what happened to Laura Kusisto.

For the first week after Laura got home, she lost her appetite and developed a low-grade fever. Concerned, she called her midwife but none of Laura’s symptoms seemed enough to warrant a trip to the hospital, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic. It was thought likely to be mastitis, a common infection while breast feeding. It wasn’t.

Laura headed to a walk-in clinic based on her obstetrician’s recommendation. There, the doctor expedited blood work that showed a high white blood cell count, potentially indicating a serious infection. Laura and her husband headed to the emergency room with their two-week-old baby in tow.

After additional bloodwork there, Laura was discharged and told to make an appointment in a couple of days with another doctor. By the next day, the hospital called and told Laura to come back in. Tests from the ER discovered bacteria in her blood – a sign of sepsis and a leading cause of maternal mortality. Blood had leaked into her abdomen following delivery and had likely become infected after she returned home.

Laura spent the next eight days in the hospital. She required a blood transfusion, surgery and six weeks of antibiotics. Due to Covid-related visitor restrictions, she was not allowed to see her infant son while she was at the hospital.

Laura was discharged from the hospital with an IV line in her arm and two surgical drains in her abdomen that made it hard to hold her son. Breast-feeding was a struggle. She ultimately made a full recovery – with only two small scars where the tubes for the drains once were.

The harrowing experience, however, has stayed with her. Her own well-being first and foremost, Laura was also concerned about the lack of patient education about potential complications, including infection. Laura wrote about it recently, [\*\*\*I Gave Birth. The Most Dangerous Part Came After.\*\*\*](#) She highlighted the need to raise awareness about postpartum healthcare and how to facilitate detection of problems and avoid complications that could be life-threatening.

