

# FACES OF AMR PROFILE STORIES



## Brandon Noble

*“The fact that 15 years have gone by, and the same drugs are being used to treat superbugs is a shame, and something needs to be done about it. This is a painful and serious situation.”*

Former NFL player Brandon Noble took his share of hits during his decade-long playing career, but nothing knocked him down like a superbug: methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA). Not only did MRSA cut his NFL career short, but it also nearly ended his life.

MRSA is a type of drug-resistant staph infection. Ironically, for Brandon, a football-related surgery led to an infection, yet his being a professional football player is also what saved him.

In April 2005, he had a routine surgery to clean out his right knee. After his stitches were removed, he noticed a hot spot develop. He experienced flu-like symptoms and the infection spread throughout his entire right leg in less than two days, culminating in his being unconscious on the sofa at his child’s second birthday party. Doctors performed emergency surgery to clean out the infection just in time; had Brandon waited any longer, he may have lost his leg or worse.

Brandon left the hospital with a peripherally inserted central catheter (PICC) line for six weeks of at-home IV antibiotic treatment. It caused exhaustion and diminished his appetite. He finished the treatment but missed the entire off-season workout program. As a result, he overcompensated for a weaker right leg due to the infection, and then injured his left leg. The injury resulted in a swollen knee that would not subside, along with the same symptoms as before.

He landed back in the hospital with MRSA again on December 15, 2005. His wife gave birth to their third child a day later. Thanks to an understanding doctor and extra precautions, Brandon was able to attend the birth, but he wasn’t able to hold his child and he went home with another PICC line and more antibiotics to treat his MRSA infection. Brandon’s cocktail of antibiotics – anywhere from five to 10 different types at any given time – continued for about a year. Today, he has become a self-described germaphobe to avoid having to endure the same struggles. He is also extra vigilant with his family, watching every cut and scrape so that his kids don’t suffer the way he did.

Even with all he has endured, he says he was fortunate that he was in the NFL when this happened, because he had access to medical staff and resources that may not be available to others. He was in peak physical condition, yet MRSA ended his career and almost took his life twice.

Brandon is committed to telling his story and educating others on these little-known but dangerous superbugs. Most surprising to him is how little has changed since his battle with MRSA. He believes more needs to be done, including devoting more resources to develop new and stronger treatments to stop MRSA and other superbugs.

