

FACES OF AMR PROFILE STORIES



Candace DeMatteis

“Through my work, I have always appreciated the need for more innovation around antibiotics. With my personal experience, I appreciate it even more. And if more people were aware of the issue of antimicrobial resistance, they also would be demanding more innovation in this area.”

Candace DeMatteis has known since she was a young child that she has allergies to certain antibiotics. As a result, she avoided two big classes of antibiotics: penicillins and sulfa drugs.

Over the years, it seemed easy enough to avoid those antibiotic classes. If Candace ever needed an antibiotic to treat an infection, there was always an alternate option. Recently, however, the options haven't been as simple and have come with some unexpected side effects.

For Candace, it all started with a skinned knee.

During a daily walk with her dog, Candace got tangled up and fell in her driveway. Her knee got banged up and bloodied but nothing serious. She cleaned it off and waited for it to heal naturally. A few weeks later, she developed tenderness and a blister over the scar. Her primary care provider referred her to an orthopedist to determine if an infection formed over the bone of her knee. Fortunately, it was just a skin-level infection below the scar.

To treat it, the doctor recommended an antibiotic that's an option for people with Candace's allergies. Unfortunately, that particular antibiotic makes Candace extremely sensitive to the sun. She discovered this side effect during a previous time when she needed the antibiotic. Candace was in her car, rolled down the window to speak with a neighbor and developed a rash during the 20 minutes she was exposed to the sun.

Since it was summer, avoiding the sun would be a challenge, particularly for someone whose family enjoys being outside. Candace asked about other treatment options. She was shocked to learn that the next antibiotic option given her allergies would require consulting an infectious disease doctor, involved significant side effects and was reserved for serious infections. It was literally like going from a fly swatter to a bazooka with nothing in between.

Serving as the policy director for the Partnership to Fight Chronic Disease and the Partnership to Fight Infectious Disease, Candace knows a lot about the risks associated with antimicrobial resistance and the importance of continued innovation for antibiotics. Her personal experience now makes her work even more relevant. She believes that, with millions of people who deal with medicine allergies like hers, having options among antibiotics that treat a range of infections is critically important.

