

Meredith Williams of California

My little girl Meredith was born premature, I went into pre-term labor between 25-28 weeks due to an abruption (where the uterine wall separates or tears). I spent almost 2 weeks on IV drip administering drugs to stop labor and I was not to get up at all. I had a lot of excess fluid that was causing pressure and making it hard to breathe; they got me up into a wheelchair to go have an X-ray and then left me sitting in a hallway for over an hour. That night I started bleeding again and dilating, they finally took my baby via C-section (at my request). I was left alone in a delivery room and noticed that the baby's heart rate and O2 levels were dropping and screamed for a nurse, at that point both the Nurse and the Dr. came in and I told the Dr. to do something to save my baby ... to take her by C-section if necessary, they rushed me in for an emergency C-section.

Meredith was 1 pound 12 oz., and was 12 inches long. Meredith spent the first 21 months of her life in "Hospital 1," 4 months of her life in Neo Natal then another 17 months in ICU due to several misdiagnoses and complications. One major complication in the beginning for Meredith was being exposed and catching two nosocomial viruses called pseudomonas and adenovirus (one of the most aggressive and deadly strains) which resulted in severe viral pneumonia (nosocomial means an infection acquired during a hospital stay, a hospital virus).

In the beginning Meredith had RDS (respiratory distress syndrome) which led to BPD (broncho pulmonary dysplasia). Then Meredith was also diagnosed with a grade II bleed in her brain that the Primary Neo Natal Doctor said she needed a shunt for and which she got in the first month of her life. I found out through medical records I managed to get (and paid \$400 dollar for to be copied when I got her home again after the RSV battle at about 6 years old) that the Neurosurgeon was not a "Hospital 1" Doctor, and he was as I see it "flying by the seat of his pants" in that operating room when he found he did not have the appropriate tools to do the shunt procedure and used an adult tunneling device on Meredith to place the shunt (as I said Meredith weighed less than 2 pounds and I feel there is no coincidence the shunt had numerous problems and needed almost immediate revision). Then one night they called me and said that they needed to do an emergency surgery for what they thought was a bowel obstruction, it turned out it was not a bowel obstruction but that a nurse had put the feeding tube through Meredith's stomach wall. They already had cut her wide open below her stomach then cut her up the front to her stomach. This was the start of abdominal scar tissue which eventually was the cause of the shunt malfunction that in the end contributed to Meredith's demise. Meredith also had a G-tube (feeding tube) inserted into her stomach through her abdominal wall after that abdominal surgery for the Nurses error and she had a G-tube for feeding all her life after that. Meredith also had inguinal hernias which she had lower abdominal surgery for and several other problems with the first shunt which was finally totally replaced when she was about 6 years old although there was a piece of the old one that they tried to retrieve and couldn't and left inside her abdominal cavity. Meredith's VP shunt was drained into her abdominal cavity all her life, something I question now that I know there were alternate places in the body to put the shunt port to drain.

As I said above, Meredith was diagnosed with a grade II bleed, the underlying cause was what is called Chiari malformation (which she was born with) which is where the brain stem is being depressed by the skull. This went undiagnosed the first 4 months and during that time her, up to that point undetermined CP (Cerebral Palsy) diagnosis, dramatically increased due to what her Doctors referred to as “black spells” where she wasn’t getting enough O2 which they for 4 months said was because of the RDS/BPD. I was also told later by her second Neurologist (I changed Neurologists when she was about 6) that it was the Chiari malformation that caused the grade II bleed and that had they done a decompression right away that, although a shunt may still have been needed, the CP also may of never become so severe. On top of everything else, it was at this point (4 months) that she caught the nosocomial viruses I mentioned above. These viruses came after the first surgery for the Chiari malformation which was performed by the same Neurosurgeon at “Hospital 1” that did the first shunt and again there were also major problems. Meredith bled out and needed over half her blood replaced, that operation almost killed her and left her with global brain damage instead of the up to that point still uncertain CP diagnosis. Meredith’s Neurosurgeon and her Neurologist at the time said it was the virus that compromised her lungs and therefore due to lack of O2 compromised her brain further and I will never know if it was the undiagnosed Chiari Syndrome, the surgery complications or the virus that did so, although I know the virus didn't help matters. Meredith had a trachea tube inserted the first year of her life (which she also had all her life) and remained on O2 and in a wheelchair with severe CP until the end of her life, she could no longer even sit up by herself and refused to eat by mouth after this incident, although she finally came home and became a very determined, happy and adjusted child full of joy and love. Meredith was a fighter and determined to live! She also LOVED her life here in-spite of her handicaps.

At almost 6 years old Meredith was admitted to “Hospital 2” for a routine shunt revision where there were again complications with the surgery, again the same Neurosurgeon this time on his own “turf” preformed the revision and she had several grand mal seizures after wards due to a mix up with her seizure medicines as well as some bleeding in the brain from the surgery. Meredith aspirated during one of those seizures and got pneumonia again. They released Meredith to me after 2 weeks, but I had to take her back to “Hospital 1” when she continued to have respiratory problems (pneumonia) and there she spent another couple of weeks at Sutter battling that. Again Meredith was released to me and I took her home. Then almost right after that Meredith was admitted to “Hospital 1” again for complications with the Shunt, she was having seizures due to the shunt not working properly and fluid building up on her brain.

At this time I had changed Neurosurgeons from the “Hospital 2” Doctor to a “Hospital 1” Doctor I also changed Neurologists. The new “Hospital 1” Neurosurgeon replaced the shunt totally. But then again Meredith was diagnosed with yet another Hospital virus called RSV (respiratory syncytial virus) on top of the pneumonia she was recovering from and she spent 4 months in an induced coma fighting for her life. It was only prayer that brought her home that time to me. “Hospital 1’s” infectious disease team also came out to OUR HOME to test for RSV because I was so mad. I told them I was sure Meredith had caught RSV at one of the hospitals during one of her last stays. The ONLY

PLACE they found RSV bacteria in my home (and they, believe me, swabbed everything) was inside Meredith's sealed suction canister (which means the RSV was only in her lungs)!!

In the end Meredith was admitted to "Hospital 1" due to a misdiagnosis of yet again another problem with the shunt and this she didn't survive. I brought Meredith in to the ER at "Hospital 1" regarding swelling in her abdominal cavity, and her being in obvious discomfort/pain. The on call Neurosurgeon sent her home saying "it is not the shunt and don't bother the ICU Doctors they are swamped upstairs". Well, I "bothered" the ICU Doctors anyway and I believe because that Doctor read the notes from the on call Neurosurgeon he just did a brief check to appease me, agreed with her and sent Meredith home saying maybe she was constipated. He told me we could admit her but that he didn't feel it was warranted and I (being scared after all the viruses she had caught decided it was best to take her home if he felt she was all right to go home). I called her Primary care Physician from home and he prescribed a laxative but also ordered an ultra sound the next day. I also took her into the Gastro Specialist the day after that and he immediately upon examining her admitted her directly to ICU and she never left there. It turned out not only was the shunt malfunctioning, she had developed kidney stones and borderline diabetes because of the misdiagnosis of the shunt malfunction which should have been caught months before when her Neurosurgeon did his routine check and definitely should have been caught by the on call Neurosurgeon in the ER at "Hospital 1" when I brought her in. Meredith had developed a pseudo cyst in her abdominal cavity where the shunt port was draining and it had been growing for months.

Meredith had emergency surgery the day after she was admitted. The surgeons drained a liter and a half of fluid off her abdominal cavity! They put a new shunt in (externalizing it for almost a week before replacing it again back into her abdominal cavity). They could do nothing at that point for the kidney stones so Meredith's kidneys started having further problems, they said she was "dumping" her urine and they gave her a drug to stop that, she stopped urinating all together after that. They put Meredith into another induced coma because she was so agitated and she never woke up from it, although at the very end she tried to. The coma had compromised her respiratory system and then came the diagnosis of another nosocomial virus MSRA (methicillin resistant staphylococcus). Meredith's attending Doctor said she didn't stand a chance of recovering.

With all Meredith had fought she had contracted the worst possible nosocomial virus, MRSA, a then fairly new "Super Bug" which was (still is) resistant to the majority of antibiotics, if not all antibiotics. So had Meredith won this last battle of complications and misdiagnoses this meant she had another War just starting, one as I said above, that no one at Sutter thought Meredith had a chance of winning ... so they gave up and let her die ... very slowly, too slowly for the Doctors to not realize they made a mistake in not doing more. They said her kidneys couldn't handle the antibiotics and that she was in renal failure, they then put a drain directly into one of Meredith's kidneys. From what I have read when you are in renal failure 72-78 hours is the norm. Meredith held on for two weeks. I never did read the results from last ultra sound of her abdominal cavity and kidneys because Meredith passed on before they went over it with me. The last attending

Doctor (before he wished me luck and excused himself from the case) told me I wasn't going to like the results of that ultra sound and the Doctor that called the time of death said Meredith's kidneys were "mush" and an autopsy wasn't going to do more than show that. I was so distraught I didn't have them do an autopsy. I couldn't stand the thought of them cutting into her more even after she was already gone.

After Meredith passed, one of Meredith's nurses came in and in a whisper asked me if I wanted an autopsy, then the Doctor came in behind her and made the remark about Meredith's kidneys being "mush", the Nurse silently and abruptly left the room. I to this day think there were things that maybe an autopsy could of brought to light and that the Nurse was trying to tell me that but ... I didn't have an autopsy done, I was just too "shell shocked". After that I asked about getting the rest of her medical records and I was told that part of them were red flagged and in the legal department, that there were incident reports that I could not look at, that a lawyer would have to subpoena them and even then it would be a fight. The State of California only gives you one year to bring a malpractice or wrongful death suit and it took me almost half a year to even begin to live something resembling a life again. I called a few Lawyers and no one would look into things pro bono and I had no money, so I gave up trying to find out more and went on with my life but I never have been able to accept what happen as "God's Will", I don't believe any of the bad that happened was "God's Will." If anything God intervened many times to give Meredith her LIFE here!! As I said Meredith LOVED her life in spite of her handicaps.

My little girl was a fighter and very brave and didn't stop fighting just because her Doctors did. I think they forgot this about her when the diagnoses of MRSA came down. From what I hear it is hard to battle even when you aren't compromised. So, if nothing is done about MRSA ... if it isn't stopped then why treat people for other things if the MRSA will kill them in the long run. Are we just supposed to just accept that? I didn't, and I still don't.

The ICU Attending Doctor gave up on Meredith during her last hospital episode early on, even before the MSRA was diagnosed, he even made me have her go through an brain scan to "show me" she was brain dead, SHE WASN'T and ONLY then would he even run more tests, the final ultra sound was one of those tests (he then excused himself from Meredith's case). In the end I was laying in bed with her and the week end on call Doctor was at bedside, the monitor lead came off and the monitor flat lined, he told me she was gone ... SHE WASN'T!! I grabbed her , the ventilator came off and she threw up, aspirated and started turning purple, at this point I started saying the Lords Prayer and decided to let her go, obviously most of Meredith's Doctor's already had from the time she was admitted.

Meredith passed away in my arms, I believe of a heart attack due to lack of O2, not from renal failure as the death certificate states. It was obvious that she had also had a stroke also because the mortician could not make one side of her face right, it was sagging from severe palsy and her eye was droopy ... her sweet face wasn't like that at all during her life nor in the last month she lived, only after she passed on. It took Meredith 5 minutes to pass away in my arms, and I believe she stroked out before her heart stopped, it was

the longest and worst 5 minutes of my entire life. I hoped and prayed during that time that Meredith's brain had shut itself off and that she didn't know what was happening ... although I could see she was trying to swallow and the frown that appeared on her face told me differently, she looked very confused and very sad. I know she is at peace now, I just believe that she should of and would have had more peace HERE if her Doctors had diagnosed her properly from the beginning, again diagnosed her properly in the end and also aggressively and properly treated her in the end. The nosocomial viruses Meredith was exposed to and caught through the years always came at the worst possible times and I truly believe all a long had they not compromised her further that Meredith would have had a good chance of a better quality of life in spite of everything.

I feel it is VERY IMPORTANT for us to fight for stricter protocols in our Hospitals concerning nosocomial infections/viruses. PREVENTION is the only thing that can make a difference because once a virus especially a nosocomial virus grabs hold, it sometimes takes a pathologist/lab a while to determine what it is and so it has a chance to settle in and none of those type viruses ever go easily and many are life threatening to patients. As we are seeing now with this "Super Bug" MSRA, this is a virus doesn't want to go AT ALL and is most the time resistant to any known antibiotic treatments. A lot of people are suffering, a lot of people are dying and yet a lot of Hospitals are up in arms about having to follow guidelines, it is expensive not to mention holds them accountable. Also, unfortunately some (not all) hospital employees feel it is a "hassle" to follow what guidelines there are in place!! I think our Legislators should be doing more to hold Hospital Administrators to stricter protocols and accountability for their hospital staffs as well as the Doctors that are in residence practicing! Maybe then we will see change.

One thing you can easily do when a loved one is in the Hospital is WASH your hands, then WASH them again through out the day/night with SOAP and water, not just hand sanitizer. I also learned to insist that anyone interacting with my daughter (anyone, even Specialists, Surgeons, Doctors, Nurses and especially Respiratory or Blood Work Therapists) WASH THEIR HANDS IN FRONT OF ME or put on sterile gloves, even if they told me they had washed their hand before entering the room, I made this request (when I was present ... they washed their hands in front of me!). I learned it was better to be safe than sorry. It may seem a small thing but it helps and it is your right to request this be done!!

May God watch over and keep you & your loved ones safe from harm and further illness during any Hospital stays.

Debra Williams, Mother of Meredith Williams (1994 - 2004 and into Eternity)