

Victims of Vaccine-Preventable Disease

Ryan Wayne Milley



Ryan Milley was 18 years old when he developed a fever and earache on Father's Day. During the night, Ryan entered his parent's room. He was weak, and in the dim light his mother noticed a rash on his stomach and could literally see blood vessels rupturing all over his body. After 25 years in the medical profession, Frankie Milley knew that her son had meningitis, and he was in trouble. She rushed him to the hospital but by the time they arrived at the ER, Ryan's legs were numb. Frankie had to carry her 6'2" grown son into the hospital as she screamed for help.

As he was rushed through the ER, multiple doctors and nurses worked on him. He was hypotensive, meaning he had a heart rate over 185, and shortly thereafter began to vomit blood. A few hours after his arrival at the hospital, Ryan's heart stopped. When it started of its own accord, Ryan's father had a chance to tell him he loved him. Ryan replied "I know" before his heart stopped once more. He died at 10:53 a.m., June 22, 1998, with Meningococemia. Ryan was Frankie's only child.

Since his death in 1998, Frankie has devoted her life to her organization in Ryan's honor, Meningitis Angels. This organization brings together survivors of meningitis and families who have lost loved ones to this disease, and they work together to save lives by preventing bacterial meningitis through educating the public. Please visit www.meningitis-angels.org for more information.

Breanne Palmer



During the evening of December 20, 2003, 15-month-old Breanne Palmer developed a slight fever and began to show symptoms similar to her brother who had recently been diagnosed with influenza. The next morning, Breanne's fever rose to 101.5° F. Her parents took her to the pediatrician where the influenza diagnosis was made. Breanne was given antibiotics and sent home.

After visiting the doctor, Breanne took a long nap and her temperature began to slowly come down. Her parents continued to monitor her condition and give Breanne medication for her fever. When Breanne went to bed that night her temperature was almost normal. However, as the night wore on, Breanne's temperature climbed again very rapidly reaching 105.5° F. Her parents put Breanne in a bath to help bring down her fever, but she began to have difficulty breathing so they called 911.

At the hospital, Breanne's temperature rose to 107° F. Her temperature was brought down by the doctors in the emergency room, but Breanne had to be transferred to another hospital for more intensive care. A special life-support machine was needed as the virus began to attack Breanne's heart and brain stem. After being transferred to yet another hospital, doctors told Breanne's parents that the damage to her young body was too extensive. There was nothing the life-support machine could do. Breanne died in her mother's arms on December 23, 2003 from Influenza A.

Breanne's parents tried to get her vaccinated against the flu in early December but because she was diagnosed with an ear infection at the time her pediatrician would not vaccinate her.

"There is not a day that goes by that I don't think about what if my daughter had been vaccinated against the flu? I believe had she been vaccinated she would still be alive today, and I would be able to hear her laughter."

– Denise Palmer, Mother of Breanne

Since losing their daughter to the flu, Breanne's parents have joined other parents who have lost their child to the flu in an effort to make sure children are protected against this deadly virus. Go to www.familiesfightingflu.org for more information.



Gabrielle "Brie" Romaguera

Brie was born on January 13, 2003, weighing only 5 pounds and 12 ounces. Brie was perfectly healthy until early one Saturday morning, February 8, when she began to have a severe cough. Her parents suspected respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and their pediatrician told them to take Brie to the ER. There, the doctors did some tests and decided that Brie simply had a cold, and gave her parents a prescription.

By Tuesday Brie was still coughing so her parents took her to the pediatrician's office for a breathing treatment. She still did not get any better, and by Wednesday evening her father and mother were taking turns sitting up with her so that they could help her when she coughed. By morning, exactly one month after Brie was born, she was coughing so hard she turned blue around her mouth. The pediatrician sent Brie and her parents straight to the local hospital but, after watching Brie pass out after another violent coughing fit, he made the decision to Helivac Brie to a larger hospital.

When Brie arrived at the hospital, tests revealed she had severe acid reflux, and the doctors thought that she was choking on her milk. They decided a surgery would correct the problem, but when Brie came out of surgery the coughing had still not stopped. The doctors tested her for pertussis and decided to treat her for the disease while they waited for the test results to return. It was already too late.

The first machine they put Brie on was a ventilator. When that did not help, they decided to put Brie on the ECMO machine. This helped her breathe and helped her heart so that her body could try to heal. She then started to leak fluid into her tissues, and this caused her to blow up to about ten times her normal size. She was put on dialysis and also had a tube put in her stomach to help release some of the

fluid. She finally began to show signs of recovery as well as some activity in her brain, until it began to bleed. Because she was on ECMO she also had to receive heparin, which is a blood thinner. The thinning of her blood caused the bleeding in her brain. It clotted later that day, but then the opposite side of her brain began bleeding.

The doctors had to take Brie off the ECMO machine. On March 6, they called Brie's parents to explain their daughter's situation and give the family enough time to come and say their goodbyes to her. Brie's mother held her one last time and rocked her while Brie's father read her a story. She lived for about 30 minutes after they turned off the machine. She was only 52 days old and just 7 days short of receiving her 1st DTP shot.