

# Corey's Story

Sunday, July 17, 1994 seemed a perfectly normal day in the life of our family. It wasn't until a week later that the picture we took of my 6-month-old son Corey became so significant. My wife, Pam, had washed and braided Corey's hair. Unaccustomed to seeing him in braids, we laughed and my wife took his picture.

Monday, Corey awoke with a slight fever and so I started him on Tempra. Corey's fever increased throughout the day as the Tempra wore off about every 3 hours. Our doctors had always suggested that we monitor our children for 24 hours before calling the office, so we waited before calling the pediatrician.

When I checked Corey at 3:00 a.m. Tuesday morning, his temperature was 103° and all attempts by Pam and I to reduce his fever were in vain. At 6:00 a.m., we called Corey's pediatrician who told us to bring him in at 8:15 that morning. When the nurse checked Corey in, his temperature was 104°. We told her Corey's symptoms included fever, vomiting, fussiness and lethargy. The doctor assessed Corey and informed us Corey had some lesions in his throat that were healing. Next, the doctor examined Corey's abdominal region and said it was tight and asked if Corey had been having diarrhea. I replied that had been no diarrhea but I was concerned his condition was serious. The pediatrician assured me Corey would be fine but was suffering from gastritis and would be miserable for two or three days. She prescribed Motrin to be given every 6 hours. **No blood work or urine analysis was ordered as is usually done in cases of high fever** but trusting in the doctor, I reluctantly took Corey home.

Corey slept on and off in his sister's arms that day without any change in his condition. We gave Corey Motrin, which brought the fever down, but still Corey did not seem to be getting any better. I stayed up with him all night. His crying was so high pitched that it will haunt me for the rest of my life.

By 11:00 a.m. Wednesday, Corey's left hand and right foot were twitching. I thought this was a reaction to the medication, but I later learned he was having seizures. His condition continued to deteriorate but remembering that the doctor stated that he would get worse before he got better, I did not call again until 10:00 p.m. By then, Corey looked worse than ever, cried as if he was in a lot of pain and began to throw up violently. When the doctor on-duty returned our call, I reviewed the last few days of Corey's illness with him, as well as, the current change in his condition. I even held the telephone to Corey's mouth so the doctor could hear his high-pitched cry. The doctor then instructed me to either give Corey ½ t. of Benadryl and ½ t. of Tylenol, or bring him to the emergency room. Because the weather was stormy and fearing the additional complication of pneumonia, I told the doctor I would try the medications first. The doctor told us if Corey was not any better by morning to bring him into the office. I sensed the doctor did not see Corey's situation as a medical emergency. Trying desperately to comfort Corey, I offered him a bottle that he refused and placed him in his swing that usually soothed him and put him to sleep. Ten minutes later, one of Corey's eyes crossed to the outside while the other remained fixed and a vacant look came over his face. Frightened out of my mind, I rushed to the swing and took him out. Corey had become stiff as a board and stopped breathing.

During the early hours of Thursday morning, I dialed 911. The look on the face of the ER doctor was one of shock and disbelief. Corey needed to be transferred 85 miles to a hospital with a Pediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU). Because of the storm, an airlift could not be used so we were directed to follow the emergency medical vehicle there. At 9:00 a.m., the PICU doctor explained to us that Corey's brain tissue was infected and the cerebral spinal fluid that should be clear, now was milky with pus. We were told if Corey survived, he would never again be the little boy we knew. We could barely comprehend what we were hearing. Then, at 2:30 p.m., Corey went into respiratory and cardiac arrest. They were able to resuscitate him but gave us slim hope that he would survive. His kidneys were shutting down, his white blood cells weren't reproducing fast enough, and his heart had just gone through a major trauma. In addition, the brain scan was showing very little signs of life. At 5:40 p.m. on Friday, July 22, 1994, my son, Corey Jackson was pronounced dead.

This is how I became acquainted with Bacterial Meningitis. I want you to know what I didn't. I wish our story was unique but it isn't. Children are often misdiagnosed with this disease so if there is any question in your mind, quickly get a second opinion, keep your child's immunizations current, and remember you know your child better than anyone does.

Ben Jackson

