

Unvaccinated Boy Nearly Dies of Tetanus. Put the Parents in Prison.



By Alex Berezow, PhD — March 7, 2019



Credit: Public Domain/Wikipedia [1]

I'm about to be a father for the very first time to a beautiful baby girl. So, I'm going to try to write this article as calmly and rationally as possible.

The CDC has reported on the horrifying near-death of a 6-year-old boy in Oregon. As is the case with so many stories these days, he was unvaccinated. He was outside playing -- which is, quite frankly, dangerous if you're not vaccinated -- when he scratched his forehead. Then a horror story ensued (emphasis added):

*Six days later, he had episodes of **crying, jaw clenching, and involuntary upper extremity muscle spasms, followed by arching of the neck and back** (opisthotonus) and generalized spasticity. Later that day, at the onset of **breathing difficulty**, the parents contacted emergency medical services, who air-transported him directly to a tertiary pediatric medical center.*

Before we move on with this tragic story, I want to show you what tetanus looks like. This is tetanus:



Source [1]: Public Domain/Wikipedia

That's what the little boy looked like. That's the reality behind medical terms like "opisthotonus." The tetanus toxin, which comes from the soil bacterium *Clostridium tetani*, prevents your muscles from relaxing. So they clench up, which is why the disease is also called "lockjaw." Muscles all over the body spasm, preventing you from moving or breathing. Untreated, the case-fatality rate for tetanus is over 90%. **This is why we vaccinate against it.**

From Bad to Worse

It got worse for the boy. Upon arriving at the hospital, the boy wanted to drink water, but he couldn't open his mouth. He could no longer breathe, so the medical team had to sedate him in order to jam a breathing tube down his tiny throat, and he was put on a mechanical ventilator.

Light and sound made his muscle spasms worse, so he was put into a darkened room with ear plugs. His body temperature soared to nearly 105° F. Doctors had to perform a tracheostomy (i.e., put a hole in his throat) in order to keep him on the artificial respirator). He had to be pumped full of pain and blood pressure medication.

Finally, after 44 excruciating days, he was taken off of ventilator support. He could barely walk. After several more days in the hospital, he was transferred to a rehabilitation facility for 17 days. Altogether, he needed about 2 months of medical care.

And the icing on the cake: Excluding air transportation and rehabilitation, the boy's medical bills piled up to well over \$800,000. Going vaccine-free was certainly worth it!

What to Do with the Parents?

In my opinion, this is a clear-cut case of child abuse. There's no moral difference between this case and that of parents who for bizarre religious reasons decide not to provide medical care to

their children. The parents should lose custody of the boy, and they should do time in prison.

If you're an anti-vaxxer, there should be consequences for your irrational, self-centered, destructive behavior.

Source ^[2]: Guzman-Cottrill JA, Lancioni C, Eriksson C, Cho Y, Liko J. "Notes from the Field: Tetanus in an Unvaccinated Child — Oregon, 2017." *MMWR* 68(9) :231-232. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6809a3> ^[3]

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Links

[1] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tetanus#/media/File:Opisthotonus_in_a_patient_suffering_from_tetanus_-_Painting_by_Sir_Charles_Bell_-_1809.jpg

[2] <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/68/wr/mm6809a3.htm>

[3] <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6809a3>