

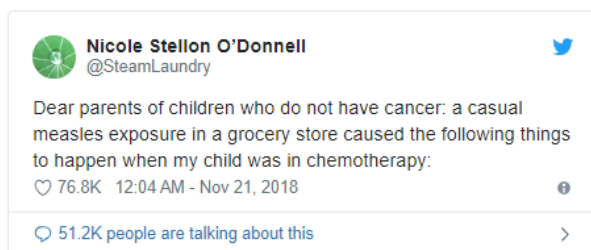
Mom of girl with cancer begs parents to vaccinate their children: ‘It’s an act of compassion’

By Elise Solé. November 24, 2018



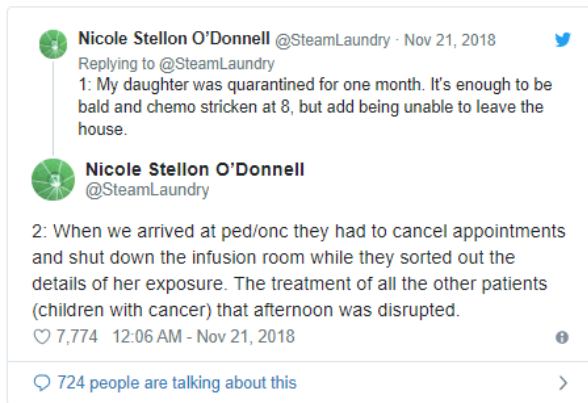
A mother is asking parents to vaccinate their children, revealing the dangerous reality for kids with cancer.

On Wednesday, author Nicole Stellon O’Donnell tweeted in a viral thread with 38,000 likes and 26,000 retweets, “Dear parents of children who do not have cancer: a casual measles exposure in a grocery store caused the following things to happen when my child was in chemotherapy.”



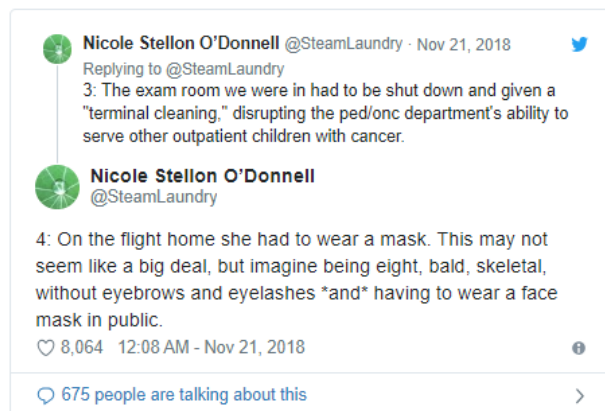
O’Donnell, a mother-of-two, explained that as a result of the exposure, her younger child, who was diagnosed with kidney cancer in 2014, suffered. “My daughter was quarantined for one month. It’s enough to be bald and chemo stricken at 8, but add being unable to leave the house,” she wrote.

She also tweeted, “When we arrived at ped/onc they had to cancel appointments and shut down the infusion room while they sorted out the details of her exposure. The treatment of all the other patients (children with cancer) that afternoon was disrupted.”

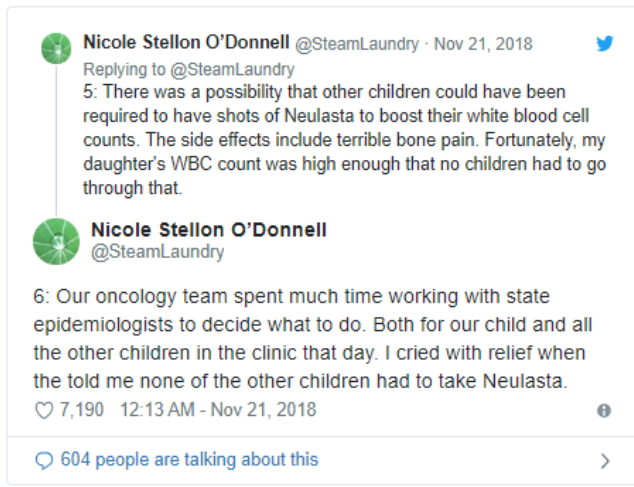


Stellon O'Donnell added, “The exam room we were in had to be shut down and given a “terminal cleaning,” disrupting the ped/onc department’s ability to serve other outpatient children with cancer.”

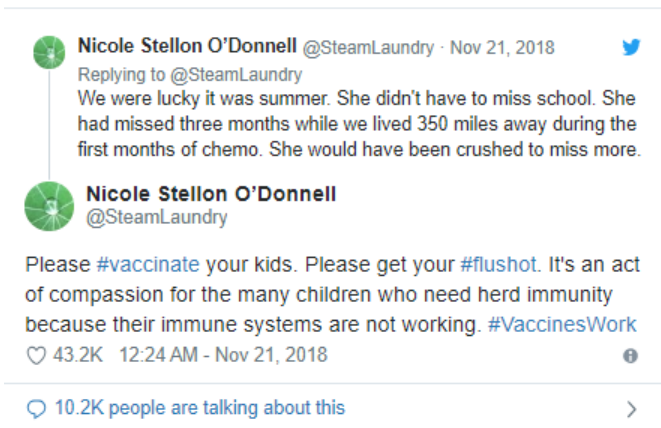
She also wrote that her daughter was forced to wear a mask on a subsequent flight home: “This may not seem like a big deal, but imagine being eight, bald, skeletal, without eyebrows and eyelashes and having to wear a face mask in public.”



Consequently, there was a related risk that other pediatric patients would require injections of a drug called Neulasta that increases the production of white blood cells. “The side effects include terrible bone pain,” Stellon O’Donnell tweeted. “Fortunately, my daughter’s WBC count was high enough that no children had to go through that...I cried with relief when they told me none of the other children had to take Neulasta.”



“Please vaccinate your kids,” she wrote. “Please get your flu shot. It’s an act of compassion for the many children who need herd immunity because their immune systems are not working.” Stellon O’Donnell added the hashtag #VaccinesWork.”



Stellon O’Donnell’s Twitter thread proved significant. “As a grown woman who is immunocompromised, thanks for posting this,” a woman tweeted. “A casual measles exposure could kill me. Thankfully the one time I know I was exposed I somehow managed enough antibodies. It was a darn miracle, and I can’t expect a miracle every time.”

Someone wrote, “Our son spent a week in isolation after measles exposure. He had a heart transplant and can’t get the MMR. Your tweet sums the chaos and panic of an exposure up perfectly.” Another person tweeted, “I am also immunocompromised and appreciate you putting this out there. People don’t understand this can mean our death.”

Robert Huizenga, M.D., a Beverly Hills-based internist and associate professor of Clinical Medicine at the University of California, Los Angeles, tells Yahoo Lifestyle that children with weakened immune systems, such as cancer patients receiving chemotherapy, should avoid the MMR vaccine, which protects



against measles, mumps, and rubella. “The MMR shot is a live virus vaccine that, for people with compromised immunity, may not be effective or cause serious infections,” he says.

To create herd immunity, says Huizenga, roughly 90 percent of the population should vaccinate to protect this smaller number of people. “If you drop below that, too many people are at risk,” he adds. Measles can spread through coughing and sneezing, and live for two hours in the air, per the Centers for Disease Control, and in grocery stores, where shopping carts are handled by changing hands can be hotspots.

Huizenga says that people who don’t vaccinate for non-medical reasons shouldn’t be demonized. “Everyone wants to be good parents but some people place too much emphasis on bad science,” he says. “Doctors should also take partial blame for low vaccination rates — we need to give more information to patients.”

Stellon O’Donnell did not return Yahoo Lifestyle’s requests for comment.

<https://www.yahoo.com/lifestyle/mom-girl-cancer-begs-parents-vaccinate-children-act-compassion-140135488.html>