



**Alicia Cole** had been a successful working actress whose only experience with healthcare was playing doctors on TV. All that changed, however, when she learned in 2006 that she needed a “routine” procedure to remove two small uterine fibroids. Originally, she was scheduled to be home in two days, but that never took place. She left the operating room with a fever, nausea, and pain, and her condition declined from there.

Five days later, during the evening dressing check, Alicia’s mother noticed a small black dot near the incision. In just over an hour, the dot morphed into a quarter-sized pustule. Right then and there, the doctor and Alicia’s mother performed a bedside surgical procedure, cutting open her abdomen and draining the toxic fluid. A terrified Alicia would eventually be diagnosed with multiple hospital-acquired infections including necrotizing fasciitis.

Alicia’s near-fatal case of flesh-eating disease turned her entire midsection into something out of a horror movie and her two-day hospital stay turned into: one month in ICU, two months in the hospital, six additional surgeries, near amputation of her leg, a year and two months of twice-a-day home health care for dressing changes, five months of daily hyperbaric oxygen chamber treatments and three years of treatment at a wound care center for an open, draining abdomen. Six years later, she is still in physical therapy and undergoing pelvic floor rehabilitation.

Alicia’s hospital was later cited for violation of five state laws and ten federal laws for patient safety, infection control, and unsanitary conditions in their operating rooms. An ICU nurse later shared that Alicia was his third patient with NF disease and the only one to survive.

With a talk-to-typ...

**Alicia Cole**

## Speech Topics

 **Healthcare**

