



June 21, 2016

Lorne Michaels
Executive Producer
The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
30 Rockefeller Plaza
New York, NY 10112

Dear Mr. Michaels:

On behalf of the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA) and the more than 15 million Americans living with food allergies, I am writing to share our concerns about a recent segment on “The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon.” The segment starred [Ricky Gervais](#) in which he openly mocked the significance of food allergies in the daily lives of millions of Americans.

In the segment, Mr. Gervais’ description that someone experiencing a severe allergic reaction to nuts would “blow up like a big frog” was pointed and hurtful, particularly given the reality that individuals in anaphylaxis can experience trouble breathing, loss of consciousness, vomiting and even death. Severe allergic reactions require immediate treatment with epinephrine and a visit to the nearest emergency room for proper care, and there are very few emergency rooms at 32,000 ft.

His joke about trying to induce anaphylaxis on board an airplane by rubbing nuts all over his body was particularly shocking and frightening. Meanwhile, Mr. Fallon did nothing but play along when he could have at least leveled the conversation with a call-out to the growing significance of food allergies across America, and particularly among the sons and daughters of parents who love watching his show.

AAFA (www_aaфа.org and www.kidswithfoodallergies.org), a not-for-profit organization founded in 1953, is the leading patient organization for people with asthma and allergies, and the oldest asthma and allergy patient group in the world. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 50 million Americans have allergies.¹ There is no cure for food allergies. Living with food allergy can have negative effects on the quality of life of patients and their families because they need to remain vigilant about accidental exposures.² The National Academy of Medicine (NAM) has a project underway to examine critical issues related to food allergy (FA), including the prevalence and severity of FA and its



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impact on affected individuals, families, and communities; and current understanding of FA as a disease, and in diagnostics, treatments, prevention, and public policy.³

We acknowledge the importance comedy plays in our lives, and applaud what you have created for so many decades now, but joking about anaphylaxis and trying to trigger a severe allergic response in another human cannot be tolerated. We strongly urge you to refrain from accepting this type of ugly and bullying sarcasm on your show in the future.

We are available to discuss further. Please feel free to contact me at csennett@aafa.org, or Meryl Bloomrosen, AAFA's Vice President, Policy, Advocacy and Research at mbloomrosen@aafa.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Cary Sennett".

Cary Sennett, MD, PhD, FACP
President and CEO
The Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America

¹Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Allergies. Available at:
<http://www.cdc.gov/healthcommunication/toolstemplates/entertainmenttips/allergies.html>
Published 2011. Accessed May 11, 2016.

²<https://www.niaid.nih.gov/topics/foodAllergy/Pages/WhyResearchFoodAllergy.aspx>

³<http://www.nationalacademies.org/hmd/Activities/Nutrition/FoodAllergies.aspx#sthash.V46yuiLk.dpuf>