

## Chantal's Story

My first child, Rhiannon was born in 1999. I am diabetic, and from 20 weeks pregnancy my blood pressure went very high, though I was reassured that this was ok (I know now it was not) and I was so swollen that I gained 2 shoe sizes. From this point on I always felt very tired and unwell, although I was reassured that this was how pregnant women were meant to feel. When I was 33 weeks I went to have my first regular heart trace of the baby done (due to my diabetes), Rhiannon's heart rate was very fast, my blood pressure was much higher than it had been the previous week and I had a lot of protein in my urine. I was admitted to the ward for 'a rest' with pre eclampsia and later that night was told by my consultant that I would be given steroids and have the baby in 2 days time. At this time I was unable to urinate but constantly felt like my bladder was so full that I was about to wet myself. I had a severe pain in my right side. Later that night I awoke gasping for breath, other patients in the ward called for the midwife, who abruptly told me I was only having a panic attack!

My BP was now much higher again and my heartrate was racing, and I was still gasping for breath and feeling extremely hot. The foetal monitor was attached, Rhiannon's heart beat was only 40bpm, I obviously showed a great deal of concern at this. At this point the midwife J turned off the foetal monitor as it was only making my BP worse! I have felt very guilty for years as I let her do this. I was then told that I would need a caesarean, at no point did anyone stress the urgency of this. I waited for a long time for the anaesthetist who did an epidural. By this time the midwife J was frantically looking for Rhiannon's heartbeat which she now could not find.

They sprayed the cold water onto my stomach and I said that I could still feel it. The Dr's ignored me and said they would get started. At this point I became hysterical and I had to be held down while she was delivered. I realise that she needed to be born very quickly but at no point did they offer to top up my pain relief or offer me a general anaesthetic. She was resuscitated with adrenalin and rushed to SCBU.

My blood pressure was still extremely high and I was kept in high dependency for 2 days and not allowed to visit Rhiannon until I had a tantrum. When she was 2 days old I was told by Rhiannon's consultant that they thought she was brain damaged due to lack of oxygen before birth. Some midwives were brilliant supportive and offered some hope, but others were very brutal.

After 7 days I was discharged from hospital, only to be readmitted with breathing difficulties later that day. The maternity unit refused to take me as I might have infections from outside. So I was forced to wait 4 hours in resuscitation in A&E while heart attack victims were brought in, I then spent 2 days in intensive care (again not allowed to visit Rhiannon), then I was transferred to the cardiac ward and had to have a daily tantrum to be allowed to visit Rhiannon for 20 mins a day.

When Rhiannon was 12 days old she was allowed out of intensive care, as her condition had improved. I left hospital when Rhiannon was 2 weeks old, it was later discovered that my thyroid was so overactive it was off the scale, but they didn't tell me for another 6 weeks! This was the cause of my pre and post eclampsia and breathing problems! Rhiannon was discharged at 5 weeks, a week before her due date. She has very slight problems with her balance, but apart from that is absolutely fine. She is a lovely intelligent little girl, who by some miracle survived

her treatment before her birth.

In 2003 I had another baby, but this time I insisted on an elective caesarean and kept a very close eye on my blood pressure myself. I did go to the same hospital. Most midwives remembered me from the time before, and couldn't believe how well Rhiannon was, saying she was my 'miracle baby'.

Strangely enough the midwife J who switched the foetal monitor off stayed away, perhaps she felt too guilty! Craig's birth was straight forward, I had a spinal this time (apparently you shouldn't be given an epidural for a caesarean birth) this was 3 years too late for this advice.

One midwife G was particularly horrible she refused to take my blood pressure every day as she had 'really sick people to take care of'. Also when I asked for the leaflet regarding exercises to do after a c section, she refused saying I should remember them after the last time!!!!!!!!!!