

# Women's Health Presentation

## Thyroid Health

There was only one red flag throughout my pregnancy around health and that was the midwife noting that I had low iron. However, after giving birth, I came out of hospital weighing only seven and a half stone. I became a shaky, sweaty, nervous and anxious wreck. I suffered from palpitations and was constantly eating but putting on absolutely no weight.

Not only this, but my personality changed. When I went to the doctor to understand what was happening, they put it down to me being an anxious new mother and that I could go on anti-depressants if it didn't wear off. This was my first episode of not being listened to. I refused medication and this went on for another year even though I kept saying that I wasn't depressed. Eventually, I saw a doctor who took one look at me and said he thought I had an overactive thyroid and immediately referred me to an endocrinologist. Finally, I thought, I can put a name to what I've been going through.

The doctors then told me that I should have my thyroid removed. Again, I listened thinking that they know what they are talking about. After the surgery, I instinctively knew that something had gone horribly wrong. I repeatedly asked to see a doctor and was told that I was anxious and was dismissed. I remember thinking how unbelievable it was that I was in hospital, being ignored, after just having my neck cut. After a few hours, I looked in the mirror to see my neck was actually wider than my shoulders and that I couldn't speak. Finally, I staggered out of my room to make the drive myself to A and E.

As I got to the car park, an anaesthetist who was just starting her shift saw me and immediately reached into her pocket for her scalpel and cut open the stitches on my neck. As they got me back to bed, they found what was a haematoma. At this instance, all I could think was "I'm going to die in this hospital bed because no one was listening to me."

My husband got to the hospital and said that when he came in it was a bloodbath. He asked three times if I was going to die, to which he got no answer. Hearing this, I thought, "this is it." The nurses who were holding my hand kept saying how brave I was and all I could think was: "I'm not brave. I can't get up and run away."

After this, I was rushed back to theatre with a wad of paper towels holding my neck closed. My husband was told the surgery would take 45 minutes. 8 hours later, he was told that they didn't think I was coming back up.

I can get over what happened, even though it was horrific. What I cannot get over is not being listened to and coming out from this to be given a little pill to do what my thyroid did. After this, I became obese, I lost my hair, my blood pressure and cholesterol became very high. I was told I had depression, fibromyalgia. I was tested for multiple sclerosis and chronic fatigue syndrome. I was on beta blockers, tramadol, anti-depressants, and sleeping pills. You name it, I was on it.

I finally went to a G.P who prescribed thyroid medication. Straight away I felt like I was coming back from the dead. I was then referred to an endocrinologist who would be able to prescribe it long term. Here, I was told that medicine was not for the likes of me. Finally, I found a doctor who prescribed me natural pig's thyroid gland. Now, I fully came back from the dead. Within three months, I went back to my G.P. who unticked all my repeat prescriptions and said that in all her 30 years had never taken one person off so many medications at once.

After all this, I woke up one morning and thought how ludicrous this situation truly was. That doctors were manifestly failing to give me what my glands used to produce as a substitute. I went to see my local M.S.P. and decided to petition the Scottish Parliament with a few other women. Whilst we have made progress, within these five and a half years, people are still paying for private blood tests, consultations and thyroid medication online. We are basically paying a fortune for what we should be rightly provided on the NHS. It is still a battle. Often, it feels when we hold roundtables with surgeons and consultants that it is a bunch of professional men telling a bunch of women who are actually living this that they are wrong. So, the fight still goes on.