

Scenario 2 – the consultant obstetrician’s story - part 1

I'm a consultant obstetrician, being a consultant for four years now and I would never have guessed or dreamed that I'd be in this situation I'm in now.

It's always been my dream job since a child, you know, bringing new life into the world, but it's actually feeling more like a nightmare at the moment.

I can't sleep properly. I'm feeling stressed and worried all the time. I just feel alone in what I'm going through.

Basically it's because of what's been happening with one of my patients. And this is a patient who I've seen previously in her previous pregnancy.

During her previous pregnancy, she was advised heavily, really strongly not to get pregnant again.

And that's because it was found out she had a serious heart condition which going along with another pregnancy would have meant that it would have had such a negative impact on her health and, you know, she could possibly end up losing her life.

So, at 16 weeks, she comes into me at antenatal clinic, and I'm really surprised that she's 16 weeks pregnant.

I did say to her again, you know, ask her about whether she remembered about the, the potential risks.

She said she just wanted a normal pregnancy this time. She was so happy; her and her partner were really happy.

I mean, I did advise that having a caesarean section would be the safest method for her, given the strain on her heart.

I couldn't really give too much details at the time and couldn't really go fully into the advice when she first came in.

So, I gave her a leaflet and she promised to come back the next week, which she did. She came in the next week, and I had a bit more time to talk to her, but again, she just was so adamant that she wanted, in her words, a normal delivery.

She wanted the least intervention as possible. So, all throughout her pregnancy I've been, you know, really worried.

I've been trying to, you know, maybe change my tactics in terms of what I say, giving her advice.

She's 30 weeks now and her health has been deteriorating. And she has agreed to see the cardiologist and it's being monitored, but she's still adamant not to have a caesarean section.

And that's what I'm really, really worried about. I don't know if her body could go through, just a spontaneous delivery as she wants.

So, we have had a multidisciplinary team meeting and in that meeting, I left feeling so alone and isolated, because I don't think anybody really understood or had as many concerns as I do.

Everyone was just saying, well, it's her choice, it's her decision. The trust solicitor was even there, and he just said, well, as long as I'm keeping careful detailed notes of each time I give the advice about the possible risks and the dangers, you know, and that she knows that there's risks that she could lose her life or the baby could lose her life.

As long as I'm keeping those notes, then that's all we could do as a trust really.

And I, you know, I wouldn't be to blame, but I do feel like I would be to blame. I mean, I just feel like it's a bit like a ticking time bomb really.

Every time the phone rings, every time there's a, you know, one of our workplace WhatsApp group pings, I'm just thinking, is it to do with her?

And, you know, has she had a cardiac arrest or, you know, I'm so worried. I just don't know if I'm cut out for this role.

I feel like any other consultant would have been able to persuade her to make the decision, the safest decision, to have a caesarean section, which I've not been able to.

It was my dream role, but now it's just turning into a nightmare because all I wanted to do was bring life into the world but now lives might be lost.