AIMS For a better birth...

Hearing impaired and giving birth during the pandemic

AIMS Journal, 2024, Vol 36, No 4



By Helen Jones-Grace

I was pregnant during the first lockdown and gave birth during the second lockdown in February 2021.

I am hearing impaired in one ear and wear a hearing aid. Appointments with the midwife on the telephone were not too bad as my phone is linked to my hearing aid. Face to face appointments were very difficult as masks were worn, so at times I could not hear what was being said. I did not realise how much I relied on lip reading. All appointments I had to attend on my own, so had no one to relay the information to me if I missed anything.

When I went into labour, I had to go into hospital on my own, and again, masks were worn so I was unable to understand some things that were said. It was written in my notes that I was hearing impaired but no one seemed to take any notice of this. After a couple of hours of being left in an assessment ward they realised that I needed to be moved to the labour ward. At this point my husband was able to come into the hospital. This made a big difference as I now had someone who could hear what was being said If I missed it and could take his mask off to tell me.

As a result of being left on the assessment ward and being in labour for so long my baby was in distress so it was decided that I needed to have an emergency c-section. I was told that I needed to take my hearing aid out and my glasses off. I got overwhelmed by the whole process and couldn't cope with not being able to hear or see so it was agreed that I could keep my glasses on.

After the c-section my husband had to leave straight away so again I was left on my own. Due to being in hospital for so long my hearing aid now needed to be charged. Without anyone with me I had to rely on the midwives' help. I asked on a few occasions for them to get my hearing aid charger from my bag and to plug it in for me but was told they were busy and would return soon to get it. This never happened. (Due to the surgery I was unable to get it myself)

I was then moved to a separate 6-bed room after recovery and I was the only patient in that particular room. I again asked for my hearing aid charger which they said they would return to do that, but again nobody returned. I was also not given any food or helped into bed and spent the night sitting on a chair! (This was brought up with the health board and the excuse was that due to the pandemic and staff shortages they were very busy!)

Once the change of shift in the morning had happened, everything changed and the lovely staff got my hearing aid charger from my bag and charged my hearing aid, got me food and helped me into bed!

Author Bio: Helen, and her beautiful daughter Isobel, live in Wales