AIMS For a better birth...

Memories of George

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Radka Elliott wrote this piece only two days after George's birth

I would like to share our story, which is very fresh and raw... My husband and I are hurting very much. Just last Thursday, on 23 April 2015, at 40wk+5, during a routine check, ready for an induction, we found out that our baby's heart had stopped beating. Our angel son George was stillborn on Sunday, 26 April, at 7:51am, weighing 3lb 13oz (1.8kg) and 48cm long.

My pregnancy had been a textbook one; I was blooming and loved being pregnant. We didn't know the sex of the baby, we wanted a surprise. I had no morning sickness, was looking after myself, ate the right diet, and was swimming, walking and practising yoga regularly. Checkups with the midwife were quick, simply because there were no problems. I kept active to prepare me for the birth, which I feared greatly, yet I was so excited about the wee one coming that I simply suppressed my fear. My sweet hubby was ecstatic about the prospect of becoming a Daddy: we kept feeling the kicks on a regular basis, especially at night, that was like a ritual. We thought our wee one is a night owl ... just like his Mummy.

I was given a membrane sweep around my due date and was hoping for the labour to start, but nothing really happened. My next check-up with the midwife was Thursday 23 April. When she was listening for the wee one's heartbeat, there was none! Alarmed, she got another midwife and then we were sent to the hospital to get a thorough check. As soon as we arrived, they took us for a scan and broke the horrible news to us that our baby's heart was definitely not beating. A complete out of body experience thereafter, my hubby and I could not believe this was happening. We were taken to a different room where a very supportive midwife tried to console us and clarify things.

The next massive hit was being told that I had to give birth to the wee one! I mean WHAT? I am to give birth to a dead baby? Can they not do a C-section? No, the best way forward was to give birth vaginally - we felt this was so inhumane and heartless - did we not have enough to come to terms with already? I was given a pill to start the labour and we were told to come back to the labour ward on Saturday at 4pm to give birth. We were numb, it all felt so surreal when we told our parents and then our closest friends - I kept stroking my belly and talking to our baby hoping for a miracle to happen. Thankfully, my lovely in-laws came to stay and went to the hospital with us; I felt my husband needed his parents' support in order to be strong for me, and so on Saturday afternoon we made our way to the hospital, and I felt like I was going for an execution.

We were given a room at the very end of the labour ward, it was surprisingly therapeutic to both of us to

hear a baby's cry: the birth of a healthy baby is a happy event after all, and a very compassionate and lovely midwife was looking after us from then on. The midwife was perplexed that she could not feel any waters (and they had definitely not broken beforehand). She confirmed the baby was not alive, which was like a lightning strike to me, no hope for a miracle. At this point I was determined to be strong and give birth to my baby with as much dignity and love as I could muster, and this would be my gift to the wee soul.

I had a straightforward labour but a birth complicated by shoulder dystocia. I am very proud of myself and feel at peace for I delivered our angel with the help of TENS machine, gas and air, and only a small episiotomy (I suppose my grief was greater than the physical pain). After George was born his condition indicated that he may have been an angel for more than a few days, his placenta was very small, and he was also very light, they took him away (with our consent) and brought him back later all wrapped up and clean and sleeping. I got timeless cuddles with my boy all Sunday before I had to say goodbye the following day (just yesterday), and this helped me greatly with my grieving process. I took some pictures on my phone, and we got the SiMBA memory box too (see Stillbirth Support Resources for further details).

My darling husband has not looked at or cuddled George, and that is totally fine by me. He said with time he may be brave enough to look at our son but, for now, he does not want to spoil the image he has. The hospital staff were amazing, my in-laws were able to use the family room while we stayed overnight, everybody doing their utmost to make this horrible situation as bearable as possible. More importantly, they were treating our angel son with great dignity, respect and compassion, and for that we are very grateful.

Now at home and seeing all the baby stuff around us makes our hearts bleed, but we are strong, we love and support each other, and we shall come out of this even stronger. Our angel son will guide us through; after all he got us even closer together. We have become parents of a beautiful son, who we'll never see smile or grow up. In George's memory we have set up on a regular basis a donation to SiMBA, the amount is £26.04 (George's birthday) and it will come out of our account every 18th of the month (George's due date).