AIMS For a better birth...

High risk or unknown quantity?

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When I was 19 I found out I was pregnant – I have Perthes disease, which is uncommon in females.

> *Perthes' disease occurs in a part of the hip joint called the femoral head. This is the rounded top of the femur (thigh bone) which sits inside the acetabulum (the hip socket). Something happens to the small blood vessels which supply the femoral head with blood so parts of the femoral head lose their blood supply. As a result, the bone cells in the affected area die, the bone softens, and the bone can fracture or become distorted. The severity of the condition can vary.*[Explanation from the Perthes Association]

I have always lived with pain and discomfort and there had always been some concern if I were to fall pregnant. At the time (the pregnancy was unplanned) I was taking pain medications and there was a lot of concern about the damage I may have done. I saw the midwife who brusquely told me that my pelvis would not hold the baby for more than seven months and then they'd section me.

I was horrified. It was the last thing I wanted. I argued my case; for a start I was single, how would I manage to be bed bound? I didn't want one! I had plenty of discussions about being selfish and putting my baby at risk and was often told I'd be held accountable if my baby died. I was so frightened no one would support me and I was referred to as awkward and stupid. In a routine physio appointment I burst into tears. The physio sat with me, she was the only person who heard what I was saying. We put together a plan of positions to keep my pelvis nice and open. The pregnancy was a little uncomfortable toward the end.

I came up with a birth plan that kept my options open. I'd go into labour and wait and see how baby was doing. I'd be 'allowed' to labour for 12 hours then I'd be taken for a section. If baby didn't arrive by 40 weeks I'd be booked for a caesarean.

I agreed to all this – it felt like I was being done a favour! Luckily my daughter made her entrance three weeks before the EDD – on the sofa. I didn't have time to do much apart from call for an ambulance, they were marvellous.

She emerged with no problem at all – I was on my back, almost sitting, and she just slid out in three pushes.

I have had two other babies after her with no problem. I wonder how much my care team even knew about the issues they were suggesting surgery to 'fix'.