



Pregnancy
Sickness
Support

HG Truths with Afni Shah-Hamilton

Afni talks openly in these blogs, originally posted by Suzette Woodward here: (<https://suzettewoodward.org/2016/11/28/a-tale-of-two-births/>)



So this is my story.

My first pregnancy started with me being sick at around 8 weeks. However, this didn't feel normal. I was being sick all day not just in the morning and I was feeling permanently nauseated. I started to feel really quite ill – I was progressively becoming dangerously dehydrated and my weight was tumbling down.

This I didn't realise was the start of hyperemesis

Hyperemesis Gravidarum (HG) is extreme sickness – almost continual nausea and vomiting all day long, which can cause dehydration, ketosis, weight loss and low blood pressure – along with feelings of isolation and despair.

I went to my GP who I have to say was fantastic then and throughout. She really made me feel like she understood what I was going through but she also didn't know quite what to do to make me feel better. She provided me some medication to help with the nausea but the unceasing vomiting continued.

My first appointment with the midwife was not nearly as helpful as my GP. She did not understand the severity of my sickness and said 'you're having a baby so get flexible'. I was left feeling at a loss; she didn't take my condition seriously or understand how my allergy made the condition worse or the implications of potential drug issues such as the inability to take certain pain relief or antibiotics during labour. So despite my signs and symptoms and my obvious distress I felt like I was

being dismissed as someone who was complaining too much over something that is considered to be a natural part of life.

Hyperemesis is a severe and debilitating disease – you are unable to eat more than a few bites of food at a time, and only occasionally would they stay down. Unfortunately, there is no known cause, and no proven cure. For many women the variety of medications only help take the edge off the worst of the symptoms — and some women with severe case are hospitalized for the entirety of their pregnancies. It takes a mental toll, but it is not a mental illness. The saddest thing is that you feel miserable at a time when it should be one of the most joyous times of life.

With hyperemesis you can barely muster up energy to read a book let alone go out and about. This impacts on your partner, your family and all around you. One of the worst things about it is how isolating it is. I could not go out, or talk on the phone for a long time because it made me feel sick. However, many healthcare practitioners seem to be unfamiliar with hyperemesis and we are often classified as having a “mental condition” and told to just “get over it”. This is simply not true — it is a physiological disease, one that must be treated aggressively and compassionately.

You can read the rest of Afni’s stories via the links below:

<https://suzettewoodward.org/2016/12/01/a-tale-of-two-births-2/>

<https://suzettewoodward.org/2016/12/15/a-tale-of-two-births-3/>

<https://suzettewoodward.org/2016/12/20/a-tale-of-two-births-4/>