



## CELEBRATING CAESAREANS WEEK (AUGUST 13–19, 2018)

*First ever annual appreciation of a medical intervention that has saved the lives, and protected the quality of lives, of countless mothers and babies worldwide.*

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This week provides an opportunity to reflect on, appreciate and celebrate the many positive stories and experiences of caesarean birth around the world, to appreciate the skills of competent obstetricians, to challenge the automatic stigma that is often associated with surgical birth, and to **rethink the assumption that surgery is always an “adverse outcome”**.

Of the 295 responses to this **SURVEY** of positive caesarean birth experiences worldwide (so far), almost two thirds of mothers say they are thankful because... **surgery saved their life and/or ensured their baby was born safe and healthy:**

### QUOTES FROM MOTHERS

*“it saved both myself and my baby” “without it I wouldn’t be here to tell my story” “I would have died without it” “it saved my little one’s life” “after a traumatic 50+ hour labour and an undiagnosed breech it was relief to have an emergency caesarean” “up to that point the entire labour was an utter trauma; as soon as they said emergency C I thought thank duck for that” “my twins would not have made it otherwise” “my son wouldn’t be here if I hadn’t had one” “both my children arrived safely” “I found it a wonderful experience” “both myself and my baby was safe and healthy. I had a healing birth after a previous traumatic birth... my son’s head got fractured during a forceps delivery” “my son and I are alive! my c-section was due to severe pre-eclampsia so if I did not have access to fast acting medical professionals I don’t know what the outcome would have been” “previous birth trauma and neo natal death” “I had a traumatic first birth ending in an emergency caesarean; this left baby in NICU and me with PTSD & PND. I wanted to minimise the chances of the same happening again” “I was able to avoid further damage to my pelvic floor after a third degree tear” “calm, controlled experience” “my baby arrived safely; once I’d been told I’d need a caesarean, the experience was very calm and much less stressful than I’d expected.” “healthy, happy baby”*

**Pauline Hull, author and journalist, says,** *“This is not about ‘promoting’ caesarean birth, but rather appreciating and celebrating the advances in technology and improvements in safety that have saved lives, and provided many women today with choice. We celebrate so many other medical interventions, including IVF’s recent 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary, yet even though Louise Brown’s birth was a planned caesarean, the benefits of surgical birth are often awarded only begrudging praise, at best, and reserved for ‘precious babies’ or private patients, instead of being communicated more widely.”*

### REASONS TO CELEBRATE

There is significant criticism and misinformation around caesareans, caesarean rates, women who choose caesareans, babies who are born by caesarean, and doctors who perform caesareans, and while some caesarean concerns are valid, and many caesareans are unwanted and traumatic, it can be easy to forget just how high rates of maternal and perinatal mortality (and severe morbidity) have been historically. Yes, *‘women have been giving birth for thousands of years’* but without the availability of modern caesarean birth, outcomes for mothers and babies were, and are, considerably worse.

This week celebrates caesareans on behalf of all the families who are forever grateful that this medical intervention is available, and whose mothers and children might not be here today without it. It also celebrates maternal autonomy, where it exists, with all birth plan risks and benefits discussed, allowing women to make their own informed decision.

## SUPPORTING QUOTES

### ***Maria Booker, Birthrights***

"We know that being treated with dignity and respect, and feeling in control over decisions is critical to a positive birth experience. Caesarean birth is no less a birth than a physiological birth and Celebrating Caesareans Week is a great opportunity to highlight the fantastic work that is being done by some hospitals to make a caesarean a positive and personalised experience for women whether planned or unplanned, through choice or necessity."

### ***Professor Michael Keighley, The MASIC Foundation***

"The MASIC Foundation, concerned about preventing obstetric anal sphincter injury in childbirth, endorses the right of every pregnant woman to receive evidence-based, unbiased and personalised information when discussing a planned mode of birth with her care provider. The potential associated risks and benefits of all care choices, both for the mother and her baby, should always be explained in a way that is understandable, relevant and sensitive. Respect for each woman's autonomy and individuality must be the cornerstone of maternity care."

### ***Kim Thomas, Birth Trauma Association (BTA)***

"When a woman has had a traumatic experience giving birth, the thought of having to go through it again can be terrifying. But for some women, the option of a planned caesarean can make all the difference. Not every woman wants it, but those who do usually tell us that it's a calmer and happier experience, with some saying that it helps them heal from their earlier traumatic birth. Knowing that they can have a caesarean if they ask for it means that some women who can't face labour again are able to have a second child. That's something to be celebrated, not denigrated."

### ***Katherine O'Brien, British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS)***

"Caesareans should of course be celebrated as an important medical intervention which can protect the health of women and their babies, but they should also be celebrated as a valid choice and a positive birth experience for many women. There is no "right number" of caesareans, and we should not work on the assumption that every caesarean is an "adverse outcome." What matters is that every woman is able to give birth in the way that is right for her, and that she is able to access the care and support that she needs."

### ***Karen Hillyer, Erb's Palsy Group***

"We are delighted to support Celebrating Caesareans Week. The families in our organisation are very grateful to those obstetricians who recognise the impact and trauma that having a baby affected by a Brachial Plexus Injury brings. Our organisation has many families who have more than one child affected by Erb's Palsy, and had those subsequent deliveries been planned caesarean births, the outcome for their babies would have been very different. For some women, a caesarean birth represents an opportunity to extend their families in a healing and positive way, and we are pleased to be associated with this awareness campaign."

### ***Penny Christensen, Birth Trauma Canada***

"Competently done, cesareans and regional anesthesia are the biggest medical advancements in obstetrics to date. They should be celebrated as such."

### ***Dr Felicity Plaat, Consultant Obstetric Anaesthetist***

"I have long argued that the caesarean rate is not an outcome, let alone an adverse one. It should not be used to measure the success or otherwise of units or obstetricians; it is a process to facilitate birth that is safe for baby and mother. It is no coincidence that in resource poor areas of the world where the caesarean rate is extremely low, maternal and neonatal mortality is unacceptably high. I am delighted that finally we are celebrating an operation that has saved so many lives around the world and thoroughly support Celebrating Caesareans Week."

### ***Amy Dawes, Australasian Birth Trauma Association (ABTA)***

"We are so conditioned to believe that a vaginal birth is the 'right' way to give birth, instead of recognising that cesarean sections are usually necessary interventions that not only save lives, but also help preserve quality of life for both mothers and babies. We need to look at evidence-based research and acknowledge that, for some women, a cesarean

section may be the safest and least traumatic birth method for her and her baby, or it may simply be her choice. A one-size-fits-all approach to birth is unhelpful, and we should celebrate the fact that today, women have choices.”

***Deborah Morgan, Specialist Perinatal Psychotherapist, Perinatal Illness-UK***

“One of the most challenging issues is the psychological impact of a difficult birth on mothers and their families. A ‘natural birth’ can be textbook perfect but still cause psychological issues for some mothers. The answer is to offer choice and let women make an informed decision. Some women cannot deliver vaginally or it may harm them to do so, while others feel strongly that a caesarean would prevent severe psychological symptoms from happening to them. We should celebrate the fact that this option can help them both. We also need to think carefully about the message we are sending to women who need or choose to have a caesarean. Is it regarded as an inferior choice? If so, why? Surely if a caesarean birth means you feel empowered and safe, isn’t this a better long-term outcome for mothers and children?”

***Robert Devine, Pyramid Of Antenatal Change (POAC), Scotland***

“Caesareans save lives. This fact cannot be disputed, and there are many families who are very grateful for their existence. We believe that communicating and celebrating caesarean birth benefits is not the same as promoting surgery, and what's most important is that women are given the information they need, including late term scan results, to make their own birth decision.”

***Dr. Jason Collins, Author of Silent Risk: Issues about the Human Umbilical Cord***

“One hundred percent of mothers cannot deliver vaginally for a variety of reasons. Some need assistance, such as help with forceps or other devices. When used appropriately, caesarean birth is a proven and safe surgical procedure. Not too long ago, many mothers did not survive a difficult vaginal birth, and they would labour for weeks and die of exhaustion. Even today, many babies die during childbirth when there are unidentified cord complications, such as knots or entanglements. It's important to recognise the value of a timely caesarean.”

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

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