



Jessica's trust

raising awareness of childbed fever

Childbed Fever.

It's not a disease of the past, but it should be.

It's now also known as Puerperal Sepsis and Puerperal Fever, but it's the same old killer of healthy young women, even in 21st Century Britain.

Its symptoms are easy to recognise and it is easily treated with antibiotics if diagnosed early enough.

In 1982-84 there were no maternal deaths from sepsis in the UK, but the incidence of childbed fever is now rising, despite falling rates of maternal death overall.

12% of maternal deaths are due to sepsis

Confidential Enquiry into Maternal and Child Health 2000-2002

www.jessicatrust.org.uk

Jessica Palmer died of Childbed Fever in June 2004.

It is an archaic disease that is seen by many to belong in the 18th and 19th centuries.

It is defined as infection of the uterus following the birth of a child. In western medicine today it is unlikely to be caused by poor hygiene - although historically it was the lack of hygiene standards that led to its spread in epidemic proportions. It does not have to be caused by retained placenta or any error or misjudgement at birth.

A perfect, complication free delivery is no guarantee of safety from sepsis. Jessica died, like others, because Group A Streptococcus invaded her uterus.

Group A Streptococcus is a relatively common bacteria, which some people have quite harmlessly on their skin, in their nose, throat or genital tract.

It is a nasty and highly toxic organism. If it is able to take hold in the ideal conditions of a post partum uterus and the symptoms of infection are not caught early enough, death will follow. It will overwhelm even the healthiest mother's immune system.

Any infection in mothers should ring alarm bells, and the trigger should be any sign of fever or general feeling of unwell. Do not put a temperature down to 'mother's milk coming in' unless you are certain it cannot be infection.

“ If, by retelling Jessica's story, I prompt one exhausted midwife or hard-pressed health visitor to look down at a sick new mum and think 'hang on, I wonder if this is septicæmia', then it will be worth it.

Ben Palmer

”

“I am an Independent Midwife, a supervisor of midwives and writer. I am just emailing you to offer any support, advice or help for your very important campaign. Thank you for doing such important work. It will make a difference.” LA

Please visit our website for more information and to sign our petition to the Prime Minister