

News-Register

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2015
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2008
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2009
National Newspaper
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News-Register | Joanna Mikolajczak

From the Editor's Desk:

A mother's nightmare becomes reality

I have always wanted to be a mother. In fact, there was never a time in my life when I didn't, until the day I had a miscarriage.



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On July 15, I found out I was pregnant and I was beyond ecstatic. I hadn't been feeling well, and my husband, Sam, told me to take a test, but he didn't think I could be pregnant since we had just started to try for a baby.

The joy and happiness of the pregnancy turned to deathly fear and pain. I will always remember everything from those couple of weeks.

We were overjoyed --- I wanted to tell the world, but I knew there were risks and I needed to wait. Instead, I put all that excitement into preparing for the baby. I instantly changed my diet, sleep schedule and informed my bosses so that I wouldn't be doing or lifting things that I shouldn't.

The Dream

We made an OB-GYN appointment for when I would be six weeks pregnant. A transvaginal sonogram is necessary this early in pregnancy in order to see the fetus.

That is where they stick the wand in the vagina. You can't get a normal sonogram until later in the trimester because the baby is still so small it is hard to detect.

I had my first sonogram on July 28, and the baby was growing and healthy. It was so tiny, but it was there and that feeling of laying on the table seeing your baby for the first time is indescribable.

You're growing a tiny human in you, and everything becomes real. My next appointment was set for Aug. 29. Sam and I were hoping to bring his daughter Emaline to see her new little brother or sister that day.

The Reality

However, Aug. 23 changed everything. I had been experiencing pain in my right arm and leg that slowly became worse. My OB told me to go to the emergency room because she didn't think it had anything to do with the pregnancy, but she wanted to ensure everything was OK.

Sam rushed me to the hospital, and the first thing I told the staff at Texas Health Methodist in HEB was that I was 10 weeks pregnant and I was in pain.

Despite telling them that, every nurse or doctor that came into my room had no idea I was pregnant, and I had to constantly keep reminding them. All except one nurse who was also pregnant.

I asked her if they would be doing a sonogram because I was worried about the baby. She said: "I am not worried because you aren't bleeding or cramping. The baby is healthy and there is no reason for a sonogram."

That was the false hope that sent me over the edge. The doctor came in and said all my tests looked good and there wasn't anything wrong with me.

They sent me home and I sat in the nursery that night, praying my pain would go away but also thanking God that my baby was not in harm's way.

The next morning, I called my OB to tell them what the ER had said, and they wanted me to come in right away. I was told it was a red flag that they gave me an MRI scan and didn't do an ultrasound.

I almost didn't go in because the pregnant nurse had given me hope and told me everything was OK. Sam made me go in and that is when my entire world came crashing down.

I remember laying on the table holding Sam's hand while the OB was talking. I had a gut feeling that she was going to tell me there was a problem. It was at that moment my arm and leg pain disappeared as if it had never been there.

The Nightmare

The OB said the baby stopped growing at eight weeks and there was no heartbeat. After those words left her mouth I was stuck in time, frozen, looking at the screen where my

baby was surrounded by red and not moving.

Every hope and dream gone. Everything I had planned, from the nursery to the gender reveal party to our first Christmas evaporated.

When she explained what she saw, I saw my baby's life flash into nothingness, and I just broke. From my friends' experiences with miscarriages, I remembered her having a surgery called a dilation and curettage procedure.

The OB wanted to talk about next steps, and I told her that I wanted to have one and get this over with, but there was one small issue.



News-Register | Heather Sheridan
Garden in Heather Sheridans back yard where her and her husband buried their miscarried baby.

She said the heartbeat bill took those away and for me to get one I would have to prove that I had in fact had a miscarriage and not killed my baby. My OB wanted me to go into another place for a "second opinion."

That is how she phrased it so that it didn't sound as bad as proving my innocence. I remember just looking at the lady and walking out of the office. I didn't even have time to process what my OB had told me, and I was so baffled by it all that I just wanted to go home.

Three invasive ultrasounds, three times hearing your baby has no heartbeat, three times my reality came crashing down on me.

The next step was to see if the baby would pass naturally and if it didn't in five days I would go back for next steps. That meant I had to sit at home and pretend I wasn't still pregnant. I don't remember the days after that last appointment. I

was in my own living nightmare.

I questioned everything I had done, eaten or drank in the weeks leading up to this moment. Guilt tore me apart. I remember my family telling me not to give up - that I could try again and this wasn't the end.

I couldn't even think about another child when I still had my baby inside me. How do you move on from something so tragic?

But then the pain started. In the middle of the night, shooting pains worse than period cramps shot up my body and I awoke screaming in pain.

I was officially bleeding. I

ripped out from underneath me.

Two days went by and I was finally back in that office. Unfortunately, it wasn't as easy as just getting the pills and walking out. I had to do another invasive ultrasound. I cried the entire time she was looking at the baby.

The pain of having an invasive ultrasound while going through a miscarriage was tremendous. Everything down there is sensitive and hurting and then I had to see my baby come back onto that screen. It was the same size as last time and still no movement.

After it was over, the doctor explained how none of this was my fault and that when I was ready I could try to get pregnant again. She finally put the prescription in for the pills and told me it could take up to 24 hours to work and if everything didn't come out in the first round to take another pill.

Unfortunately, Sam had to work so I was home alone when I took the pill, and I had no clue what to expect. Not even 30 minutes later, I fell to the ground in such pain.

They said it would be worse than period cramps but not this much worse. I'd rather be stabbed or shot than feel that ever again.

I had a pallet laid out in front of the toilet with a heating pack, ice pack and pads. My friend told me to keep a lot of pads nearby because it was going to be just like birth. For those who don't know, most women have to wear a diaper after birth because of all the blood.

For six hours I screamed, cried and fought to get comfortable. I kept having to go to the bathroom to poop and vomit. I would pace the bathroom and start to waddle more and more because keeping my legs close together became more and more difficult.

Thirty minutes after Sam got home the baby passed. I remember Sam just standing in the bathroom trying to help me in anyway, but there was nothing he could do. As soon as the baby came out there was instant relief and I just cried.

I hated my family for telling me the baby wouldn't be anything more than a blood clot because it died at eight weeks, so it wasn't old enough to be anything.

I told Sam before any of this that I was not going to flush my baby down the toilet like a goldfish. It was a baby; it was my baby and it deserved better. So, he scooped the baby out of the toilet, and I wrapped the baby in paper towels.

The baby had eyes and their toes and fingers were growing. I held my baby in those paper towels and cried for what seemed like a lifetime.

We went outside to our garden and buried the baby that night. I will never forget the pain both mentally and physically of that miscarriage.

The Future

The Supreme Court of the United States and The State of Texas has taken not only women's rights to choose whether to have a baby but how they wish to handle if they lose that baby during pregnancy.

Miscarriage is the spontaneous loss of a pregnancy before the twentieth week. About 10 to 20 percent of known pregnancies end in miscarriage.

D&Cs are banned, the pills will be the next to go and then women will be forced to pass a miscarriage naturally, which for a lot of women is impossible.

When a woman miscarries, she is walking around with a dead child in her stomach. Eventually they will start to decompose and release toxins that can kill the woman or even make them sterile for the rest of their life.

I am not the first woman to experience such a horrible miscarriage since the laws have changed.

Marlena Stell, a woman who wanted to give her daughter a sibling, spoke to CNN about how she was forced to carry her dead fetus for two weeks after a doctor refused to provide medical intervention due to a Texas anti-abortion law. Stell said, "A law forcing women to have children they don't want is forcing her to consider not having children she does want."

This speaks volumes for me as well. How can I try and get pregnant again if it means putting my life at risk? All because my state won't give me the healthcare I deserve. No woman who is trying to start a family should have to think about that.

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances." — United States Constitution, First Amendment

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