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## Women's experiences of undiagnosed breech birth and the effects on future thinking around childbirth

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**Introduction:** An unexpected breech birth in labor affects 1 woman in every 100 in the UK. Not only does an undiagnosed breech presentation pose a clinical problem in obstetrics and midwifery, but importantly, it often creates an emergency situation for women where there is little time to plan, prepare or potentially choose what the next steps should be for themselves and their baby. This could have implications for a woman's psychological well-being.

**Aim:** This qualitative study aims to give voice to women who have experienced an undiagnosed breech birth and will consider the influence this experience may have had on future thinking around childbirth. Above all, women's feelings are the main point of consideration rather than a mode of delivery or clinical outcomes of breech birth; both of which have dominated the research in this area.

**Methods:** Pre-existing textual data from discussion boards on Mumsnet, a UK parenting website, were examined. Inductive thematic analysis of 83 messages using the 6-step process advocated by Braun and Clarke (2006) was carried out and five key themes were identified: 'I was unlucky though, dc3 [darling child number 3] was undiagnosed breech', 'Obstetricians are not the enemy!', 'They told me it is not my decision but the decision of the consultants', 'His head was pretty misshapen and his legs were up by his head' and 'Feeling like a crap mum'. Two sub-themes were also identified, 'Just got to work through it and keep on swimming' and 'You just don't know what will happen!'

**Findings:** The findings suggest that women generally regard undiagnosed breech birth as a negative experience that gives rise to feelings of fear, anxiety, and anger. They feel they are not listened to by healthcare professionals and lose all choices regarding their own care. Future thinking around childbirth is also impacted, with some women deciding to have no more children due to their undiagnosed breech birth. The role of health psychologists is key in providing support for women who are experiencing negative emotional impacts as a result of an undiagnosed breech birth.

### Biography

Katie Lightfoot is a Lecturer in Health Psychology and Medical Education at Norwich Medical School, University of East Anglia. She is also a Trainee Health Psychologist and is pursuing her Doctorate degree at University of West England, Bristol. This research has been submitted for her final thesis. She is also a qualified teacher and has had over 10 years of teaching experience teaching Psychology at all levels in schools, colleges and at university. She also contributes as a presenter, trainer and examiner for a national examination awarding body.

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