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LOST IN THE NORMALITY OF BIRTH

A study in grounded theory
exploring the experiences of mothers
who had
unplanned abdominal surgery
at the time of birth

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts in Midwifery
at Massey University

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ABSTRACT

This thesis presents a research study using grounded theory methodology to explore the experiences of women who have unplanned abdominal surgery at the time of childbirth, commonly referred to as casearean section. The intent of this study was to describe, understand and finally encapsulate in a model the personal impact on mothers of unplanned abdominal surgery at the the time of birth, for women who receive care within the current New Zealand maternity services.

Ten participants who had unplanned casearean sections were asked to share their personal experiences during unstructured interviews. The question asked was : *What was it like for you when you had your baby and what does it mean for you now?*

The data analysis in this study shows the experience for these mothers to be very stressful. Coming to terms with a birthing experience that did not meet their expectations, feelings of loss of control, unexpected pain and discomfort, difficulty in nurturing their babies and a great need to experience birth were all revealed. Mothers felt they were not listened to by some midwives and as a result had many unmet needs. Some midwives and health professionals appeared to view the major abdominal surgery that occurred as an alternative method of birthing, often trivialising the impact of the surgery and significance of having a casearean birth for this group of mothers.

The implications for midwives and maternity services providers are broad, including the need for continuity of care and specialist nursing and midwifery care to meet the needs of this small but significant group of mothers and their babies.

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