

To the Doctor in charge

A&E attendance on Friday 27 October and Pregnancy Unit on Mon 30 October 2006

I am writing to complain about the way I was treated when I attended your A&E Department recently when I was 14 weeks pregnant and had started to bleed. My husband drove me to the hospital and I arrived at about 20.30 hours. I was very distressed and losing blood, which was visible on my jeans, but this didn't have any impact on the receptionists on duty and I had to stand in the busy waiting area for my turn to register at the Reception desk. I appreciate that I may not have been a priority in their eyes but I feel that due to the delicate nature of my situation I should've been taken out of the waiting area or even been allowed to wait in a side room.

I was eventually seen 2.5 hours later by a nurse who took a urine sample and my blood pressure and then asked me to wait to see the doctor.

After waiting another hour I was seen at midnight by a doctor who asked about my symptoms, how many weeks I was pregnant and then he felt my stomach. The doctor did show empathy but he then proceeded to tell me that he had some experience in gynecology and he was 90 - 95% certain that I had lost or was losing my baby. My husband and I were distraught, we felt like our world had just come crashing down. I asked the doctor if I could have a scan and he said that I couldn't because there was no one qualified to scan, and I would have to come back after the weekend for a scan. I was very upset and he said he was sorry I could not have a scan for three days and I would just have to wait and see what happened over the weekend. We left the hospital shocked and numb and, with having to advise our families that I was losing or had lost my baby was the worst weekend of our lives.

I came back to the pregnancy unit as arranged at 11.30 am on Monday 30 October. The nurse there said they were too busy to scan me and I would have to come back on Tuesday afternoon but I burst into tears and refused to leave without a scan. I eventually had a scan at 16.00 hours on Monday and they found a heart beat and told me that I had not lost my baby. I was shocked and amazed and pleased, but I was very angry that I had been through so much worry unnecessarily.

I want to know why the A&E doctor told me on Friday that I had lost or was losing my baby when his diagnosis was based on assumption and nothing more. We should NEVER have been told this without real facts and without having a scan and listening for the baby's heartbeat. I think it is cruel to leave it three days before I could have a scan, and it was only done then because I refused to leave the Pregnancy Unit without having a scan. Why wasn't I looked after by a competent person and our minds put at rest at the first visit to hospital.

I would like my complaint to be taken very seriously and investigated and I want a full apology. I cannot put into words the stress and upset which we experienced.

I await your response.

Valerie Malton.