Restoring the balance between normality, safety and risk

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What is normal?

"Normal" is generally considered to be that which is: typical; usual; standard; a regular pattern; occurring naturally (Webster Online Dictionary, 2004).

Is this normality?

"it is sad but I feel more comfortable when it is all happening (induction, epidural, continuous electronic fetal monitoring) because it's what I know - normal birth frightens me" (student midwife, 2009)

Is this our new normalcy?

‘Natural Caesarean Section’

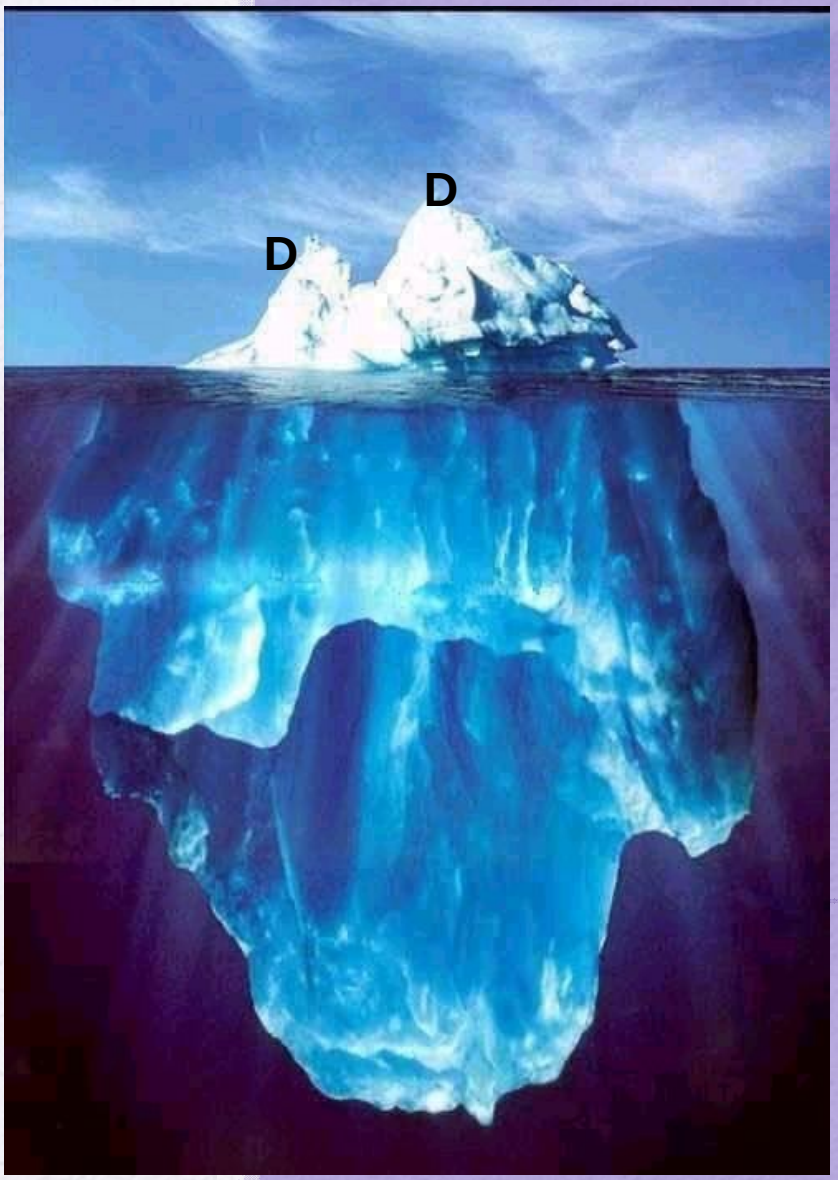
Has normal become too narrow?

Women in a coffee shop

Birth and risk

"If I were to extract only two words whereby to classify the concerns of contemporary obstetric practice, they would include not birth, but risk and death."

(Jo Murphy -Lawless, 1998 p 229)



Beware of the two D’s

Its never been a better time to live

A post-rational era

"Even in the valley of the shadow of death two plus two does not make six"

(Tolstoy)

Maintaining the Delusion

Feed the fear

Exaggerate the risk

Use the power

Sideline the dissenters

Midwives are the dissenters: Don't be sidelined

We need to deal with our fear first

"We cannot hope to begin to deal with women's fear of childbirth unless we are willing to examine our own, and recognise how we can and do contribute to women's fear" (Dahlen. 2010)

Dahlen, H. (2010). Undone by fear? Deluded by trust? . *Midwifery, Jan 2010*(10.1016/j.midw.2009.11.008).

The dilemma…

Both fear and trust are essentially useful to our survival so how can we get the balance right?

Fear and trust are connected…

By reducing fear we make space for trust

Relationships build trust

Trusting each other…

If we don’t trust each other and trust women how can women trust us and trust themselves?

Looking in the same direction….

Maternity Unit Culture

Normal births seem to be higher where there is a shared positive attitude towards birth as a normal physiological process, positive leadership, timely access to support for junior staff, commitment to evidence-based practice, integration of different parts of the service, and an ability to manage change. (Consensus statement from the Maternity Care Working Party, UK, 2007).

Slowly turning the great ship

136 million reasons….