

Baby returned to womb after tumour surgery is born again

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When Lynlee Hope came squealing into the world this summer, a doctor proclaimed her "so cute" as she had her weight recorded at Texas Children's Hospital.

It was a momentous occasion. Yet it was not strictly speaking, Lynlee's first appearance. She had been born once before, emerging briefly into the world 23 weeks and five days after she was conceived, to allow doctors to remove a tumor growing at the base of her spine. There were other traumas too: her heart had stopped briefly and a twin died early in the pregnancy. By the time she was born Lynlee had already been through the mill.

The first sign of trouble came in a routine scan at 16 weeks. "The doctor told us there was something seriously wrong," Margaret Boemer said. Her unborn child had sacrococcygeal teratoma, a rare tumour at the base of the tailbone that was diverting some of the baby's blood supply and risking causing heart failure as it grew larger.

Ms Boemer was advised to terminate the pregnancy. However, she read online of a case in which the

same condition had been successfully treated. At Texas Children's Fetal Centre she was told of a surgery that might save the infant's life. "It was a 50-50 chance," she said in an interview carried out by the hospital.

She went into surgery after the foetus showed signs of heart failure. During the five-hour surgery the baby emerged, feet first, until all but her head was outside the womb. Her heart slowed virtually to a stop as the operation proceeded and a specialist



Lynlee Hope will need therapy until college

on the surgical team intervened to apply medication and a blood transfusion that caused the heart to start beating regularly again.

A video of the procedure shows the tumour, which was nearly as large as the baby. After it was removed and placed in a receptacle it appears as large as a grapefruit.

The paediatric surgeons leading

the operation, Darrell Cass and Oluyinka Olutoye, said that the most complex part of the surgery was opening the womb to allow for the tumour to be removed.

Dr Cass told a local television station that the tumour was so large that it could be removed only by taking most of the baby out of her mother's womb. The infant was "hanging in the air", he said. "Essentially the foetus is outside, all the amniotic fluid falls out. It's actually fairly dramatic."

Afterwards the uterus was sewn shut. The video shows a surgeon tucking in a foot that was stuck out for a moment. "It's kind of a miracle you're able to open the uterus like that," Dr Cass said.

They removed most of the tumour, which began to grow again as the baby developed. Eight days after she was born again, she went back into surgery to have the rest of the tumour removed.

Ms Boemer said that Lynlee would have therapy until she went to college because her foot had been pushed into an outward position in the womb by the mass of the tumour. She said: "We're hoping and praying that she continues to do well."

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