

Trapped in the Bladder: Cystoscopic Retrieval of a Retained Catheter Following Caesarean Section

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BACKGROUND

Urinary catheterisation is routine in caesarean delivery. Failure of removal is rare but causes significant patient distress and may require operative intervention.

AIMS

To present a case of a retained indwelling urinary catheter following an uncomplicated caesarean section, highlighting diagnostic and management challenges in the postpartum setting.

CASE

A 32-year-old G6P2 underwent an uncomplicated emergency caesarean section for breech presentation at 33 weeks. Postoperative day one, a trial of void failed; the catheter remained fixed despite multiple attempts at balloon deflation, manipulation, and flushing. Cutting the catheter allowed drainage but failed to deflate the balloon. The patient became acutely distressed, requiring a Medical Emergency Team (MET) call overnight for severe suprapubic pain. Bedside ultrasound confirmed a distended bladder with an intact intravesical balloon. Following urology review, the patient underwent rigid cystoscopy under general anaesthesia, where the balloon was punctured using a needle alongside the catheter, allowing successful removal.

RESULTS

Cystoscopy demonstrated a normal urethra and bladder with no evidence of sutures, obstruction, or mucosal injury. The patient recovered well and was discharged with oral antibiotics.

DISCUSSION

Reported causes of failed deflation include valve malfunction or channel obstruction. In the obstetric context, differentials include iatrogenic suture incorporation during uterine closure, postpartum urethral oedema, pelvic haematoma, or rare anatomical abnormalities. This case underscores the importance of checking balloon integrity and deflation prior to insertion. When standard techniques fail, early bedside ultrasound and urology involvement are recommended. Prompt recognition and escalation are essential to minimise patient distress and avoid urethral trauma.



Figure 1. Bedside ultrasound demonstrating an intact, persistently inflated Foley catheter balloon within the urinary bladder.

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