

# Imagine

*In recent times when I tell my friends and family that I am one of the 209 women in Ireland that in the words of the Government would have benefited from an earlier diagnosis, the reply generally comes, "oh that's awful, I can't imagine what you must be going through".*

*Let us try and help you imagine.....*

Imagine going home this evening to find the love of your life, the one you chose to live your life and share your dreams with, gone forever and never to return. Imagine that person not being there to ask you how your day was, or mull over your problems with in the evening over dinner, a cup of tea or a glass of wine, to give you words of support, a hug, a kiss, intimacy. Imagine your life being shattered and all your hopes, plans and dreams you had together for your lives being torn apart. Imagine being told that your partner was not going to be with you to rear your children together as you had planned, to celebrate the milestones, first day of school, birthdays, days of celebration like communion, confirmation, Christmas, the look on your sons faces when Santa Claus arrives on Christmas morning and they can't wait to show Mum and Dad what he brought them. Imagine the wedding anniversaries, spent alone, cherishing the moments spent together and trying not to forget those precious times. Imagine during the night your child being sick and crying for the tender touch of his mother, trying to comfort him in his sickness while consoling him that she can't be there to hold him.

Stephen Teap doesn't have to imagine this, this is his life.

Imagine going home this evening and your children not being there. Imagine deleting them for your life, the moment you found out that you were going to have a baby, the moment they were born, their first cry, their first steps, their first words, the first time they said Mama or Dada. Imagine not tucking them into bed at night and reading them their favourite bedtime story. Imagine the family occasions without them, weekend walks, trips to the zoo, family days out, no birthday celebrations, Christmas mornings, no christenings, soccer practice, teenage discos, boyfriends/girlfriends, graduations, none. Imagine seven surgeries to try and preserve fertility and allow us to have the children we have so desperately longed for, followed by failed IVF because the surgeries depleted my ovarian reserve due to compromised blood supply. Imagine trying to find someone else to carry

a child for me, only to find out that surrogacy is not legal in Ireland and not possible and that in the UK it is possible but the surrogate mothers naturally generally choose British women, and that in India it is possible and affordable, but they treat the surrogate mothers similar to battery hens which I couldn't have on my conscience. Imagine over five years of our lives being consumed with pain, surgery, heartache, tears and disappointments.

Lorraine Walsh doesn't need to imagine this, this is her life

Imagine..... I'm sure you can't allow your heart and your head to imagine as its too painful to imagine the heartache and loss. Now imagine being told that it all could have been avoided if someone has done their job properly! I am blessed with a wonderful partner that Stephen longs to have back in his life and Stephen is blessed with two beautiful boys that I so desperately wanted. We are now both incomplete and always will be.....

It takes a huge amount of strength and courage as well as time out of our lives for us to make the long journey up here every week from Galway and Cork to sit in front of the people who represent the Health Care System that has failed us and our loved ones, but we are here and committed. We're here representing all of the 209 women and families involved in this scandal, each one of them who have a different story to tell, no two versions the same. We're here to encourage progress in implementing new procedures and processes that are so desperately needed, so think of that before you report a deadline of "a few weeks", a deadline has a date and the action is to meet that date. We're not interested in hearing about staffing issues, that's your problem, not ours or this committee's, we're only interested in hearing about your solutions. We want questions answered in a timely manner, not interested in how many places the answers lie. Most importantly we need to restore Trust and confidence back into the Cervical Screening Programme and go back to saving lives. This can't be done until everyone steps up and starts getting the answers to the questions that are asked and meeting the deadlines of the actions that are set.

Imagine that we live in a country that nobody else has to go through what Lorraine, Irene and I and the other 207 women and families have gone through.

Only the people in this room can make this a reality.....so let's do it.

Thank you