

Gynecology

Category: Me, Too

written by Kristy Snedden | January 2, 2023

When I was twenty, I scheduled my first gynecological exam. I went to a doctor recommended by girlfriends. The appointment was late in the day – five p.m. Maybe this should have alarmed me, but I thought the doctor was busy and had a heart for patients.

The waiting room was empty when I arrived, and the front desk staff had dimmed the lights to their space. As soon as the receptionist checked me in, she reached for her coat and left the building. The nurse who called me back to the exam room looked tense as she instructed me to disrobe completely, left me with paper coverings. When Dr. P entered the room, he was alone. He was an older man. I remember his gray hair. I began to feel uneasy. I asked about the nurse, and he told me she had to leave for an emergency at home. “It’s just you and me,” he said.

I thought to myself *I should get up and leave*. But he was a doctor, and my body had gone numb, felt too heavy to move. He began to molest me. I seemed to float above my body. I was far enough away to fog over the details.

I locked the memory away somehow, but I didn’t see another “female doctor” until eight years later when I was pregnant. It was 1985 and midwives were scarce, but I insisted on “females only,” and after childbirth I kept my annual exams, always with female health professionals. I didn’t understand why I panicked before each visit.

Some “Good Touch, Bad Touch” school programs still teach our children that doctors are “safe” people. But I taught my daughter three things: search for women to provide your care, insist on having a friend accompany you, and never, ever give complete trust to authority figures. All this, even with a sketchy memory. When I think of it now, I feel sad.

In my early sixties, I read about the atrocities one doctor inflicted on Simone Biles and her fellow gymnasts. I was surprised at my immediate recognition. As I watched the news a wall of rage overtook my body. Every detail of the night I was assaulted played like a movie in my mind. Every detail.

Now I can finally say it.

It happened to me, too.

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