

FRANCISCA'S STORY: FORCIBLY STERILIZED BECAUSE OF HER HIV STATUS

Francisca was 20 years old when she was forcibly sterilized by a doctor in Curicó during a cesarean delivery in 2002.

Francisca had checked in to the hospital for her scheduled cesarean delivery, but the night before the operation was scheduled to take place she went into labor. Francisca was brought into the operating room shortly after midnight. Without ever discussing family planning options or Francisca's desires, the surgeon on duty decided to surgically sterilize her while he performed the cesarean section.

"I learned that they had sterilized me at the time of the cesarean when I awoke from anesthesia a few hours later. I was in the recovery room at the Hospital of Curicó when [the nurse] entered and, after asking me how I was feeling, told me that I was sterilized and that I would not be able to have any more children," Francisca explained. "They treated me like I was less than a person. It was not my decision to end my fertility; they took it away from me."

Francisca took all the necessary steps to reduce the risk of vertical transmission to her son, and he was born HIV negative. She and her husband both mourn the loss of her fertility and their inability to provide their son with younger siblings.

Francisca lamented, "I have always wanted to be a mother, and it is still my dream to be able to have more children. Being sterilized, I feel like less than a woman because, for me, fertility is a vital part of being a woman."¹¹⁴

