

### **Box 21.8. Interview transcript: Jocelyn and Wendy**

1      Jocelyn: Last time we met, you told me that between the times  
2      that we'd seen each other, you'd been in hospital, and  
3      had had an operation.

4      Wendy: That's right, I had er the hysterectomy done last year.

5      Jocelyn: Can you tell me about that, about, take me back to the  
6      beginning with what happened. Were you unwell, what  
7      happened?

8      Wendy: It was mainly cos I'd been on the pill for twelve years,  
9      and because of my age and the fact I smoked. I was

10     reaching what they classed as erm a risk barrier, at risk

11     age, and they wanted me to come off the pill. I'd been

12     using the pill mainly to regulate my periods all that time.

13     So I knew that if I come off, I'd be having a lot of

14     problems, and basically the doctor suggested other forms

15     of contraceptive, but it wouldn't have helped me as far as

16     the bleeding was concerned.

17     Jocelyn: What was the bleeding about?

18     Wendy: My periods had never regulated from the time I'd started,

19     so I used to bleed heavily, and maybe lose for ten, fifteen

20     days at a time. The only thing that really regulated it was,

21     was the pill. But it was getting to a stage that that wasn't

22     easing it off any more.

23     Jocelyn: Right.

24     Wendy: It was unusual. I used to bleed for just five days while I

25     was on the pill. I used to know exactly when my periods

26     would start. It used to be sort of like 3.30 on a Wednesday

27     afternoon, and then it started to change. I was starting to

28     lose maybe on the Tuesday, heavier and for longer. And

29     I found that strange considering all them years it had

30     stayed the same.

31     Jocelyn: Did you talk to anyone about it before you went to see  
32     the doctor?

33     Wendy: No, no.

34     Jocelyn: No one at all?

35     Wendy: No, I was just worried myself that there might be  
36     something wrong.

37     Jocelyn: Did you ever talk about anything of that kind with either

38 Sandra or with your mother?

39 Wendy: No.

40 Jocelyn: No, or with friends?

41 Wendy: No, no. I would, I would tell them after I'd already sorted  
42 it out myself. But I would just automatically follow through  
43 on something myself. Go to my own doctor, or the family  
44 planning clinic.

45 Jocelyn: And did they talk to you about that sort of thing or not?

46 Wendy: No, no, it was never discussed. When I was younger nothing  
47 like that was ever discussed. Something that you just  
48 well I've always dealt with it on my own, I suppose I could  
49 talk to my mum about it, I just never did. Something I never  
50 spoke to her about.

51 Jocelyn: So you went to see the doctor, and she said, she sent you  
52 to the hospital.

53 Wendy: She suggested, well she said it was my body, and it was my  
54 choice. Cos, they said I could go on for quite a few years like  
55 it. But they did want me off the pill, and that I wasn't willing  
56 to do, just come off the the pill and take a chance on what  
57 would happen.

58 Jocelyn: Who was it who first mentioned having a hysterectomy then,  
59 you or them?

60 Wendy: Me.

61 Jocelyn: You?

62 Wendy: Yes, on the, erm the second occasion when I went to the  
63 hospital, that was my suggestion. He asked me what I  
64 wanted done and I said I wanted the lot taken away, and  
65 he said fine. The first doctor didn't want to know, he  
66 said I wasn't old enough. There was nothing they could do.

67 Jocelyn: How old, how old were you?

68 Wendy: About 33, 32 or 33. And then they wasn't willing to do it.

69 Jocelyn: What made you think of that as an option? Were you, you  
70 were given other options, were you given the option of  
71 being sterilised, or anything like that?

72 Wendy: No, sterilisation wouldn't have made any difference to the  
73 bleeding.

74 Jocelyn: Right.

75 Wendy: That's just a form of contraception. As far as the bleeding's

76 concerned, it's a matter of trial and testing different drugs.  
77 And I know other women that have maybe done that for  
78 four years. Tried drugs, don't work. Tried a different one,  
79 it doesn't work, try another one, it doesn't work. And they  
80 still end up having the hysterectomy done anyway. I don't  
81 see why I should go through all that hassle for two, three,  
82 four years, just for the same end result anyway. Makes you  
83 feel rather like a guinea pig, just testing out the drugs for  
84 them to see if they work. It's annoying, most of the  
85 gynaecologists are men anyway, so they don't know what  
86 you're going through. It's fine for a doctor to sit there and  
87 say you can go on for another ten years. He doesn't have  
88 that problem every month.

89 Jocelyn: You see I think that um a great many people would find it  
90 shocking that you chose that as an option.

91 Wendy: Well. No not really. I've got my children. If you want to  
92 look at it that way, that's what the womb is for. The  
93 womb is for reproduction, I've done my bit! I've got my  
94 two, I didn't want any more, so it was fine for me to have  
95 it taken away.

96 Jocelyn: Did you have any idea, have you ever had any idea  
97 about why you have always bled so much, why, why your  
98 periods haven't ever been regulated?

99 Wendy: No, I'd never, from the time mine started when I was at  
100 school, I never knew when I would start, I never knew  
101 how heavy I would lose. I used to be at home maybe for  
102 three or four days in bed. I was that ill. And the only time I  
103 wasn't was when I was on the pill. The doctor at the family  
104 planning said like they will regulate. I said I'm thirty! IF they  
105 haven't regulated in fifteen years I said I don't think they're  
106 going to now. But she just didn't want me to have it no  
107 more cos I smoked. That was it. She wanted me to stop  
108 smoking and I wouldn't. So I got my pills from my doctor  
109 instead! Just changed.

110 Jocelyn: Did she give you any explanation for why you needed to  
111 stop smoking that was connected to whether or not she  
112 would prescribe the pill?

113 Wendy: Because as you get older your blood thickens, you're more

114 thickens the blood. And taking the pill also does the same,  
115 so for me I had three factors.

116 Jocelyn: Getting older, taking the pill, smoking.

117 Wendy: Getting older taking the pill, smoking. I can't stop getting  
118 older! I wanted to stay on the pill, but I could give up  
119 smoking, you know what I mean, so that was it, you cut  
120 out the smoking and you can keep the pill.

121 Jocelyn: And what's the consequence of this been? You had the  
122 operation a year ago?

123 Wendy: Yes, I had it done last year. And I felt fine, never had no  
124 problems. Obviously same problems as anyone has after  
125 an operation, but nothing drastic.

126 Jocelyn: Um, has it made any difference to your sense of yourself?

127 Wendy: Err, no. I mean some, some women sort of say they feel  
128 less of a woman for it, I don't. Not at all. I'm same as I  
129 was before. Just can't have children. That's it. I feel better  
130 in myself healthwise, because I don't have them problems  
131 every month that I had before.

(Source: Cornwell, 1984)