

Samuel LURIE

Was Jane Seymour (1509–1537), the English Queen of Henry VIII Delivered by a Cesarean Section?

No direct evidence documents exactly how Jane Seymour gave birth on October 12, 1537. Several later commentators have raised cesarean birth as an option. This presentation explores known events around Jane Seymour's childbirth and probable cause of her death in accordance with present-day knowledge of obstetrics and whether or not a cesarean section could have been actually performed in sixteenth-century England. It appears almost certainly that there were no obstetrical indications that would have led the Queen's physicians to operate on her, a surgeon was not present at her delivery, cesarean section on a living woman was not regularly performed in England in 1537, puerperium events do not support surgery, and the existing pro-cesarean confirmation was politically motivated. Therefore, the most likely mode of Jane Seymour's delivery was vaginal rather than cesarean. Pulmonary embolism should be considered as the leading primary cause of Queen Jane Seymour's death.

drslurie@hotmail.com