

Autumn Newsletter 2009

Message from the Chair

I hope you all enjoyed the summer sun, (what little we had of it!) and had lots of fun filled days with your families during the holidays.

Things have changed for me personally since the last newsletter and I am currently 34 weeks pregnant with baby number two. After having two previous miscarriages, it has been a worrying pregnancy, but each milestone reached has been a bonus. I am very lucky to have access to a fantastic midwife this time who knows and understands about the previous trauma I suffered, and I know that whatever decisions I make about the birth, she will be there to support me. I shall update you in a future newsletter of how things went!



We welcomed three new members on to the Committee back in June, you can read more about two of them inside this issue. We are very pleased to have them on-board to share the workload and look forward to working with Lucy, Samantha and Rebecca.

The third national Birth Trauma Awareness Day took place on Saturday 15th August and we were lucky to gain some local and national media coverage on the day. If you have any ideas for fundraising and awareness events we could hold next year, please get in touch.

We have also recently carried out some training for volunteer supporters in East Anglia, you can read more on page three of the newsletter. This is the start of an exciting project, Thanks to the National Lottery Awards For All Fund, and we would be keen to set-up groups like this on a national scale if further funding can be gained.

Special Thanks must go out to "Babs" who helped us with distributing 40,000 BTA leaflets and posters to GP Surgeries, Hospitals and Children's Centres across the East of England Area as a part of this project. Back breaking work, counting leaflets and sending out well over 1,000 packages, but she did a sterling job to get them all posted out by the deadline date and her efforts were greatly appreciated by us all.

The next newsletter will be out early in the New Year, if you have a story or feature you would like to see published, please get in touch and we will do our best to include it.

Take Care and enjoy the Christmas break when it arrives.

Jules - jules@birthtraumaassociation.org.uk

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Meet Two of Our New Committee Members...

Rebecca Dickinson

I live in Leeds with my husband and one year old son. I've spent most of my career working in health and social care, initially as a support worker for adults with learning disabilities and latterly as a nurse.



During my time on the hospital wards I became increasingly interested in the ways in which people manage their medication. I joined the University Of Leeds School Of Healthcare in 2004 where I currently undertake research into ways patient's can take their medicines to best effect. Primarily a qualitative researcher, I'm interested in how patient's stories and experiences can be an impetus for change in delivering health services. I also examine the different ways information can be communicated to people aiming to ensure that patients making decisions about their healthcare are supported to make informed choices that are suitable for them. I am very passionate about research and fascinated by evidence-based medicine and how it can be applied to improve healthcare services.

Myself, I experienced a traumatic birth in 2008 with the birth of my son. A failed induction with traumatic use of the ventouse, forceps and eventually, a caesarean under General Anaesthetic resulted in injury to my son and his admission to SCBU. I was genuinely surprised at the lack of services offered to help me come to terms with the difficult events surrounding my son's delivery.

Fortunately, my son recovered from his eventful arrival into this world with little lasting damage and I was motivated to join the BTA. I aim to

utilise my research skills and knowledge to help raise awareness and prevent the incidence of birth trauma. And I am particularly interested in supporting and promoting the BTA's perspective in developing a national maternity policy.

On a personal note, I enjoy spending time with my family and enjoy the great outdoors, especially hiking and occasionally kayaking. I'm an avid fan of the seaside, enjoying spending time at my family beach-hut and I love a bracing dip in the sea. My husband has just invested in a new campervan so we hope to spend some time travelling around England. I also enjoy knitting, although I never seem to finish any projects, reading, and watching terrible TV (the worse the better). I love my bike and enjoy the daily cycle to work.

I am very much looking forward to the challenge of joining the BTA and providing support to women who have experienced difficult births.

Rebecca

rebecca@birthtraumaassociation.org.uk

Lucy Jolin

I'm very happy to be joining the BTA's committee. I'm a journalist and author specialising in health, birth and parenting issues. I've been married to Dan, also a journalist, for nearly 13 years now. We have one son and another child on the way.



Like many of us, I first became aware of PTSD following birth when I had it myself. I went into labour six weeks early and had one of those familiar 'cascade of intervention' births eventually involving an epidural which was allowed to wear off. Louis was then hospitalised for jaundice and I wasn't allowed to take him out of his UV incubator to cuddle or breastfeed him, which didn't help with bonding. I suffered nightmares, flashbacks, extreme guilt and was eventually diagnosed with post-natal depression.

I had group therapy at the Anna Freud Centre in North London, which was an interesting experience. I'm still not sure whether the actual therapy or just being able to share my story with people who understood was the main factor in my recovery.

I'm passionate about raising the profile of PN-PTSD within not just the medical professional community, but also among the general public, and to this end I've written about my own experiences for the national press. Many still find it hard to



the birth trauma association

helping people traumatised by childbirth

Meet Two of Our New Committee Members...Cont'd

accept that what's seen as a 'natural' life event can be so traumatic for some of us, and there are still plenty of people who don't know PN-PTSD exists.

I'm very much looking forward to contributing whatever I can to the BTA and I'm very happy to offer advice and support to anyone who would like to email me directly.

Lucy
lucy@birthtraumaassociation.org.uk

BTA Leaflet Translations

We are pleased to announce that our leaflet, 'Coping with a Difficult Birth and Where to get help' has now been translated into seven other languages, Farsi, Hindi, Marathi, Polish, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish.

PDFs can be downloaded from the publications page on our website.

BTA East Anglia Branch

As many of you may have read on our website and Facebook group, we recently held a training course for five volunteers in the East of England area, to enable them to offer email support via our website.

We were fortunate to gain funding from Awards for All to carry out this project, and hope that now a training package is in place, we can gain further funding to roll this out on a national scale.

Some of the topics covered on the day included:

- An introduction to the BTA
- Birth Trauma and PN PTSD
- Supporting Women to make Informed Choices

As well as the presentations, a number of useful exercises, a quiz and video birth story made for a very interesting day. Feedback from participants was extremely positive:

"A well run day, professionally presented."

"Relaxed and informal day, lots of open discussion. Good practical exercises. Training pack was great. Speakers were well informed and approachable."

"Informed choices section was great - interesting to find out about counselling and professional models. All information was presented in a clear and informative way and the course materials are very good."

A new support email address has now been set-up for those living in the East Anglia area. This covers Suffolk, Norfolk, Essex, Hertfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire.

eastanglia@birthtraumaassociation.org.uk

Thanks to all those that gave up their time to take part in the training day and to Tina for providing a wonderful lunch and refreshments. Some photos from the day are shown below.

For further details on this or any other training offered by the BTA, please contact:

jules@birthtraumaassociation.org.uk



The Training Room at Kesgrave Conference Centre

Some of the Volunteers



Enjoying Lunch in the Conservatory

Congratulations...

Congratulations to BTA Committee member, Lucy Jolin on the birth of her son in September weighing 9lb 9oz. Lucy will be writing about her subsequent, positive birth experience in a future newsletter.

Remembering Noah

Debbie Linster-Ali, our support worker in the West Midlands, sadly lost her little boy Noah on the 5th of July 2009. Noah suffered from Edwards' Syndrome (Trisomy 18) and against all the odds, had just reached his third birthday. It was with huge sadness that we heard of his death so soon after reaching this milestone.



A Happy Little Noah

Debbie does a huge amount of work for the BTA and runs the support line in the West Midlands area. Our thoughts are with Debbie and her family at this difficult time.

If anyone would like to send a donation in memory of Noah, they can be sent to the Acorns Childrens Hospice (www.acorns.org.uk) or S.O.F.T UK (www.soft.org.uk) which is the main UK charity for Edwards' Syndrome.

Edwards' Syndrome (T18), is a genetic disorder caused by the presence of all or part of an extra 18th chromosome. It is the second most common autosomal trisomy, after Downs Syndrome, that carries to term. The incidence of the syndrome is estimated as one in 3,000 live births and can cause heart abnormalities, kidney malformations, and other internal organ disorders.

BTA Conference Date

Perineal Trauma: Time to rethink practice?
A free one-day conference aimed at medical and health professionals. The conference will discuss the physical and psychological injuries women may suffer during childbirth and consider changes in practice for the future. The conference takes place on **Wednesday 4th November 2009** at the ICO Conference Centre, London. See our website for booking form/more info.

New Research Projects

The BTA is involved in a number of new and interesting research proposals currently being prepared. One is working with members of the Royal College of Psychiatrists who are proposing to develop a screening tool for post traumatic stress disorder following childbirth, the other is an application for NHS funding to explore the causes, treatment and incidence of perinatal anxiety. We are very excited about both projects and will update on progress in future newsletters.

Parliamentary Meetings

The BTA has been busy attending a variety of Parliamentary meetings during the summer months. Chair Julie Orford, Press Officer Annie Davidson and Treasurer Maureen Treadwell were invited to the Westminster Health Forum Parliamentary Reception, 29th June 2009 which was held on the Terrace Pavilion, House of Commons. The address was given by Lynne Jones MP who gave an interesting talk on changing attitudes to mental health and mental illness. There were a wide range of influential health care professionals and user groups, and the BTA were able to talk to, and hopefully influence, a number of key decision makers in the maternity services.

Choice in Childbirth

Smriti Singh has set up a campaign to ensure that women who want pain relief in labour really do get it. When the Health Care Commission asked women whether they got the pain relief they wanted in its national survey, only 64% of women were able to answer an unequivocal 'yes' – meaning over a third of women don't. Some women do not want pain relief but many do; it is clearly unacceptable for them either not to get it or to have to wait hours. Smriti's campaign can be found at: www.choiceinchildbirth.org.uk

BTA Website Visitors

April 2009	7,432	Unique Visitors
May 2009	7,502	Unique Visitors
June 2009	8,281	Unique Visitors
July 2009	8,881	Unique Visitors