

Spring Newsletter 2012

Message from the Chair

It's been another busy year for the BTA so we are very pleased to welcome on-board Lou Silver, who takes on the role of volunteer co-ordinator. Lou comes with extensive experience of managing volunteers and has slotted into the BTA team beautifully! We are also proud to announce our first patron, Professor Brian Toft OBE. Brian comes from a patient safety background and is an avid campaigner. We welcome Brian to the BTA and look forward to sharing in the wealth of knowledge he brings along.

We are currently looking for more dedicated volunteers to join us, please see page 5 of the newsletter for further information on how to apply. We are in need of an administrator, an online moderator and also an enthusiastic fundraiser. As you are probably aware, we receive no government funding and get by on a shoestring. In fact, just to give you an idea, our total income for the year ending 2011 was just £2,470! We desperately need more funds to continue with our work, so if you have any ideas or wish to raise money for the BTA, just as Jessica Laws did in the LA marathon, please do let us know!

I was very pleased to be able to talk to midwives at the Princess Royal Hospital back in February. They made me very welcome and listened intently as I spoke of our work and the awful impact birth trauma can have on families. I have also been invited to talk at the Queen Elizabeth Centre in Woolwich on 28th May, further information about this conference can be found on page 6 of the newsletter.

Earlier this year, I met with Yvette Perston and Sue Frost from Coloplast, who talked about their products for incontinence. Many ladies are sadly left with life changing injuries after a traumatic birth involving 3rd and 4th degree tears. Some of those injuries result in lifelong incontinence issues that may include having stoma bags fitted. Coloplast have developed some fantastic products to help with bowel incontinence that are available on prescription. Please see our new website page on Bowel and Bladder Problems for further information and advice.

Finally, I attended the launch of The King's Fund Toolkit at the end of March, "Improving safety in maternity services". The toolkit aims to provide a number of tools, templates and hints and tips to help maternity teams improve the safety of care they offer. Various NHS Trusts were involved in developing the toolkit, drawing on their experiences of not just 'high risk' women, but also those considered 'low risk' giving birth in the community.

There was a lot of talk on the day around choice and improving women's experience of maternity services which was fantastic to hear, but it was also evident that the current system is not allowing midwives to provide the care that they actually want to provide for women. We all need to work together to ensure maternity services ARE improved, or sadly I believe we will see more and more cases of birth trauma.

Wishing you a happy, sun-filled summer!

Take Care

Jules - jules@birthtraumaassociation.org.uk



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helping people traumatised by childbirth

Getting the message to midwives

'Excellent, informative, valuable, helpful' – just a few of the comments that midwives used to describe the BTA's recent training session at the Princess Royal University Hospital in Kent.

30 midwives attended the training, led by Chair of the BTA **Julie Orford**. They listened to a presentation containing key facts about birth trauma, case studies, risk factors and how midwives might help.

They then watched a video birth story, and the session ended with an interactive exercise to demonstrate the importance of good communication. Feedback on the day was extremely positive, with 100% of staff who filled in a feedback form stating they would recommend the training to others.

One midwife said that she appreciated the *'real stories, and realisation that as midwives we may say something or make a comment that we felt was encouraging or comforting but actually our choice of words can be damaging.'*

The BTA would like to thank the staff from the PRUH for making us feel so welcome on the day, and all those attendees who listened so intently.

If you would like a training session at your hospital, please email jules@birthtraumaassociation.org.uk for further details and costings. The sessions usually last around two hours.

New branch for Manchester

Caroline Hardie and **Susanne Remic** are getting together to launch a Manchester branch of the Birth Trauma Association. We wish Caroline and Susanne every success and look forward to hearing more from what we feel will be a very active branch. If you live in or near Manchester and would like to get involved please contact Caroline on cazzyscorner@hotmail.co.uk

New NICE guidelines for tokophobic women

When Hannah got in touch with the BTA for help with her tokophobia (an extreme fear of childbirth), she wrote: 'I don't know where to turn. I know I can't go through it all again and have made an appointment for a termination.'

Hannah (not her real name) isn't alone. The BTA has campaigned against the unacceptable treatment of women with tokophobia for many years. Many had their fears dismissed. Those who wanted caesareans were refused.

Yet research by the psychiatrist Kristina Hofberg shows that women have better outcomes if they are listened to and have their choices respected.

Now, NICE guidelines on caesareans have been changed for the better. Although tokophobic women will still be encouraged to go for counselling, they should now be given a choice between a c-section and a vaginal delivery.

The BTA was quoted in the NICE guideline press release: 'We hear accounts from women whose fear of vaginal birth has driven them to abort a much-wanted baby because their health professionals could not guarantee them a planned CS. The outcomes for women who have been traumatised by a previous birth experience, or who have a serious fear of childbirth will be hugely improved by this guideline.' However, guidelines are one thing – practice is another.

If you suffer from tokophobia, please let us know your experiences during your pregnancy.

You can email us on enquiries@birthtraumaassociation.org.uk

To read the new patient guideline, see: <http://www.nice.org.uk/nicemedialive/13620/57166/57166.pdf>

Get the Government to listen

The Birth Trauma Association has been attending the Maternity and Newborn Reference Focus Groups, organised by the Department of Health in Westminster. These groups are looking at the government's proposed health reforms, and how they will affect maternity services. If you have strong views about the reforms, please email us - we want your voices to be heard!

enquiries@birthtraumaassociation.org.uk

A warm welcome to our new patron...



Patient safety is a major issue for the BTA. That's why we're so pleased to have **Professor Brian Toft OBE** on board as our new Patron. He is the world's first Professor of Patient Safety and campaigns tirelessly on this issue.

Professor Toft says: *"I am honoured to have been chosen as Patron because of my expertise and passion in this field. Traumatic birth doesn't just affect a patient's mental and physical wellbeing, it also carries a high price for the NHS, in both litigation costs and the costs of repairing the damage caused when a birth goes wrong."*

"Around 200,000 women every year experience some symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder following childbirth, and many of these traumatic births could have been avoided if patient safety, both mother's and baby's, had been considered."

Birth Trauma Association Chair, Julie Orford says: *"We are absolutely delighted that Professor Toft has agreed to be our Patron. Professor Toft is a tireless campaigner on this issue and we are thrilled that he is now putting his considerable expertise at our disposal."*

Professor Toft also holds a number of senior advisory positions in the field of risk management in connection with health and public safety. He is a member of the Joint Commission International European Regional Advisory Council on healthcare and patient safety, which is a World Health Organisation (WHO) collaborating centre for patient safety.

...and our new management committee member!

We are equally delighted to welcome **Lou Silver**, self-styled 'volunteer policy and procedure geek' to the BTA's management committee.



Lou says: *"I have a gorgeous two year old son whose arrival into this world is the reason I am writing this. He arrived in 2010 following a catalogue of misinformation and misrepresentation, a very lengthy induction and an emergency c-section. I joined the BTA in 2011 shortly after completing a course of EMDR therapy."*

"In my other life, I work full-time as a Project Development Officer in Student Support Services at Nottingham Trent University. My areas of work include mental health, autism, disability and care leavers. I have previously worked for a number of years managing local, regional and national volunteer programmes in the fields of housing advice, money education and refugee awareness."

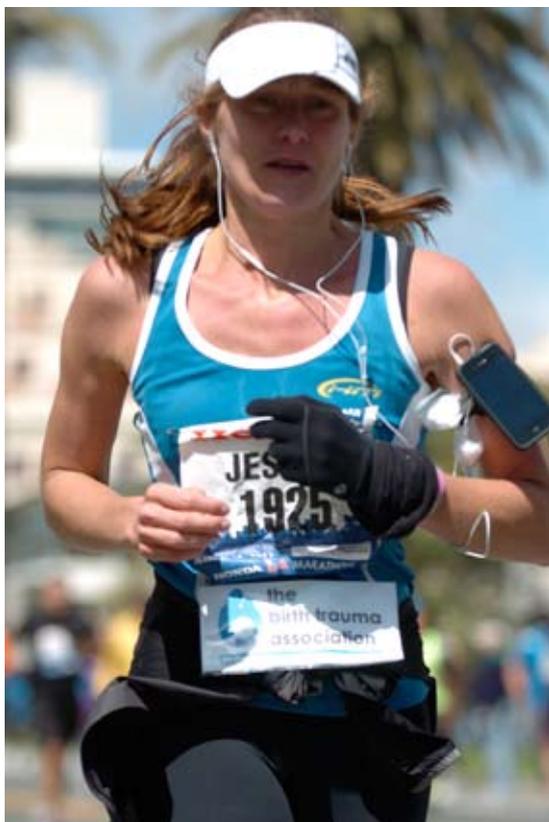
"My role at the BTA is to be the volunteer policy and procedure geek! Although we are a grassroots, parents-supporting-parents organisation, there is an abundance of legislation, good practice guidelines and occupational standards relating to volunteer management that needs to be negotiated."

"My hope is create a volunteer scheme which is easy to get involved in and easy for people to benefit from, whilst making sure that behind the scenes we are safeguarding everyone's wellbeing in the best way we can. To do this right takes time. My motivation is to enable more women to recognise that what they are experiencing is the result of a trauma, that they aren't alone and that they can heal."

Lou can be contacted at:
lou@birthtraumaassociation.org.uk

LA runner raises more than £1000

The BTA receives no government funding at all, and cuts have meant many charities chasing the same pot of money. So we were delighted beyond measure when **Jessica Laws** chose to run the Los Angeles marathon in aid of the BTA and raised over £1,000.



The birth of Jessica's second daughter was complicated and life-threatening. She began running as a way to get back into shape both physically and emotionally.

Jessica told us: "I'm so happy to be running for the BTA. It inspires me when I'm digging deep during those tough miles. I feel I have raised awareness in my own way among my friends and peers and it feels good to be able to give something back."

'Despite six months and over 500 miles of training, the marathon was longer and tougher than I thought it would be. Like labour, every moment you know you

are getting closer and closer to that much desired end result... only you can stop at any time! I don't know if that is easier or harder.

'The physical and emotional roller coaster is unbelievable but the end result is worth it - still not a patch on childbirth though! My family and running for a cause so personal to me was inspiring when I needed to dig deep.

'Running a marathon seems like an almost impossible feat when you first start but raising money for something personal gives you that extra motivation when you need it. Reposting your fundraising page, and the responses it receives, every once in a while gives you the encouragement to pull on your trainers at 6am.

'Above all, it feels so good to honour my daughter's birth in a positive way when it was something I struggled to cope with at the time - accomplishing a marathon and 'paying it forward' now feels like it's lasting legacy and not the PTSD that I suffered.'

Thank you Jessica!

If you would like to donate, Jessica's JustGiving page can be found at www.justgiving.com/Jessica-Laws. And if you're inspired by Jessica's example and would like to fundraise for the BTA, please let us know by emailing enquiries@birthtraumaassociation.org.uk



Volunteers wanted!

As the BTA expands, we need more volunteers to join us. Might one of the roles below suit you?

Please note that all these roles are unpaid positions but travel expenses will be provided. You must also have your own computer with internet access as we are unable to provide these.

We're looking for a dedicated volunteer to take on the job of **BTA Administrator**. It would only involve a small time commitment of a few hours each month and will include tasks such as:

- Putting together meeting agendas and taking minutes at meetings and distributing to committee members once approved. Meetings take place in London every 3-4 months so living within travelling distance of London is necessary for this role.
- Booking meeting rooms and liaising to find suitable date with all committee members.
- Posting out leaflets on request and proof reading the BTA newsletter.
- Producing the quarterly web stats report in Microsoft Word, no technical knowledge necessary as training will be provided.

We are also looking for:

An **online moderator** for our online message boards which we hope to be launching soon. Experience of moderating online communities sensitively would be an advantage, but is not essential.

A **fundraiser** to assist with writing and researching funding bids and to help run small fundraising campaigns for the BTA. Experience of fundraising for charities would be an advantage, but enthusiasm and inventive ideas are also very much welcome.

If you're interested in any of these roles, please email the following details:

- Full Name and Contact Details (Tel No/Address)
- Details of any relevant experience you have
- Why you would like to volunteer for the BTA

send to:
volunteers@birthtraumaassociation.org.uk

CLOSING
DATE
6th June
2012

Help for Highlands women

HAPIS (Highland Ante/Postnatal Illness & Depression Support) is a Highland charity based in Inverness. It has been run predominately by volunteers since 2001 and supports families who may be struggling with the debilitating effects of depression and mood disorders in pregnancy and the first year after birth and provides support via text, phone, home visits and group meetings.

For more information visit <http://www.hapis.org.uk>



Join us on Facebook

facebook

Our Facebook group continues to be very active and is now approaching 1,000 members. It's wonderful and inspirational to see so many of you supporting each other through very difficult times.

You can find us at:
www.facebook.com/groups/52018411070
or search Facebook for **Birth Trauma Association**

It's a closed group so you'll have to request to join but Jules is normally very quick to reply!

Loss of a Baby Group

We also now have a group for those who have suffered the loss of a baby through birth trauma. This is also a closed group. To join please visit:
www.facebook.com/groups/199177836845076
or search Facebook for
Birth Trauma Association - Loss of a Baby

Help for bladder and bowel incontinence

Suffering bladder and bowel incontinence following childbirth is sadly common, but very hard to talk about. There's now a new page on our website which aims to tell you a little about simple solutions and possible treatments for these problems. We'd like to thank Sue and Yvette from continence care company **Coloplast** for providing us with the text.

www.birthtraumaassociation.org.uk/bladder_bowel.htm

In the news

It's been an amazing year for media coverage. At times the phone has been ringing off the hook! We're hoping that the increased media interest in what the BTA has to say is shows a real change in attitudes towards birth.

The biggest media frenzy blew up when the BTA was featured in a **Times** report on the huge number of posts Mumsnet received on the subject of women being refused epidurals. We received calls from all the major national newspapers. **Lucy Jolin** of the management committee also discussed the issue on **Woman's Hour** and **BBC Breakfast**.

We had coverage in several of the leading nationals during the release of the **NICE** Caesarean Section Guideline and have taken part in a variety of radio and TV programmes on subjects such as traumatic birth, tokophobia and caesarean section. And we are currently helping with no less than three TV programmes.

This upsurge in interest is fantastic. However, it also means that we are in constant need of media volunteers who are prepared to talk about their experiences for TV, radio and print.

Please email lucy_jolin@mac.com if you would like to be a media volunteer, or you're thinking about it and would like to find out what it involves.

Research Updates

A UK study has found that 17 per cent of women interviewed had some symptoms of childbirth related PTSD at 2 years after the birth.

Find out more here:

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21824044>

A study of more than 900 participants has found no difference in rates of PTSD in home or hospital settings. It says that there's no association with the place of birth but clear associations with other factors such as emergency caesareans and poor pain relief.

Find out more here:

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21557681>

A new and important study on the role of partner support in post-traumatic stress symptoms and postpartum depression in couples after childbirth has suggested that support needs to be focused on both parents.

Find out more here:

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21295438>

New Website Pages

NHS
National Institute for
Health and Clinical Excellence

We have recently added a new page to our website with links through to NICE, (The National Institute

for Health and Clinical Excellence), guidelines around gynaecology, pregnancy and birth and also the RCOG, (Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists), guidelines. Well worth a look as these are evidence based documents that healthcare professionals should be following. There are also links through to other relevant NICE guidelines such as:

- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Faecal Incontinence
- Urinary Incontinence

Please see:

www.birthtraumaassociation.org.uk/NICE.htm

Maternity Conference

South London Healthcare Trust are proud to announce the 2012 conference to be held:

28th May 2012

The hidden truth of Childbirth finally revealed
Queen Elizabeth Education Centre, Woolwich

£40 SLHT delegates

£70 External delegates

Speakers include:

Angela Gorman, Life for African Mothers
James Eldridge, Consultant Anaesthetist, Portsmouth Hospital
Jenni Thomas, Rosie's Rainbow Fund
Julie Orford, The Birth Trauma Association
Nancy Durrell McKenna, Photographer & Videographer
Dr Ron Daniels, Survive Sepsis
Sukrutha Veerareddy, Consultant Obstetrician, SLHT

For more information and an application form contact vikki.coleman@nhs.net
Places are limited, so don't delay book today.
Refreshments will be provided.