

## Winter Newsletter 2010

### Message from the Chair

Winter has definitely arrived in style, with many of us across the country being snowed in and in some cases, left without electricity or water. We have personally, been lucky this year and not suffered any power loss, although last year was interesting...trying to change a newborns nappy by torchlight in the middle of the night, whilst keeping warm with just the heat from the gas hob...Fun times!

The BTA were kept busy during the summer months. We decided to run a survey, to link in with Birth Trauma Awareness day in August, on women's experiences of birth.

Almost 70 per cent of women surveyed did not get the birth experience they wanted. One-third said they were not treated with dignity and respect, and were not given proper information and/or explanations during their labour. Many cited 'loss of control' and 'lack of communication' as key factors in how they felt about their births afterwards.

Some respondents said they felt 'bullied' or 'harrassed' by overstretched staff. Many felt ignored on the post-natal ward and said attempts to get an explanation for what went wrong were dismissed. All these factors are known to contribute towards both post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) following birth and post-natal depression (PND). We surveyed a random group of women across the country, not just those who were in contact with the BTA, and asked for both good and bad stories, so we were disappointed with our findings.

*"It is a tragedy that so many women are left traumatised by their experience of childbirth. Poor maternity care impacts on women, children and their families and has huge social and ultimately financial costs. The same issues arise again and again – we know the problems, let us hope that this new government will find solutions."* Maureen Treadwell, co-founder of the BTA

Myself, I have enjoyed speaking to midwives at St Johns Hospital in Chelmsford, they made me feel extremely welcome and also made a kind donation of £100 to the BTA. I also recently spoke to a very nice group of student midwives at University Campus Suffolk, again on the subject of birth trauma. The feedback from both sessions was very positive and I look forward to running more sessions such as this, next year. I was also pleased to appear in Pregnancy & Birth magazine in the summer months, more about that on page 3.

So from all at the Birth Trauma Association, wishing you and your families a very happy Christmas and new year. Enjoy the snow!

Take Care  
Jules - [jules@birthtraumaassociation.org.uk](mailto:jules@birthtraumaassociation.org.uk)



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## Research Study

**Were you seriously ill when you had your baby? Can you help with an important research study with which the BTA is involved?**



Researchers at the University of Oxford are conducting a new interview study with women (and their partners) who have experienced life-threatening conditions in pregnancy, childbirth or the immediate postnatal period.

Although “near-miss events” are rare, they can have severe consequences for women who experience them, their babies and families. Because they are rare, it is hard to study them and find out why they happen.

Researchers are keen to hear from women who have experienced such events, either recently or some time ago. We are trying to study the experiences and long term follow up information and support needs of these women and their families.

The interviews will contribute to a new module on the health experiences website, Healthtalkonline ([www.healthtalkonline.org](http://www.healthtalkonline.org)) and will be used to develop teaching and learning materials for health professionals involved in obstetric care.

This study forms one part of a 5 year research programme being run by the National Perinatal Epidemiology Unit at the University of Oxford ([www.npeu.ox.ac.uk/uknes](http://www.npeu.ox.ac.uk/uknes)) the first UK surveillance programme into “near miss events”.

If you can help or would like more information please get in touch with LISA HINTON ([lisa.hinton@dphpc.ox.ac.uk](mailto:lisa.hinton@dphpc.ox.ac.uk))

If you know of someone else who has been affected and could pass on this notice to them, we would be most grateful.

We are able to receive new examples of women who have experienced life-threatening conditions in pregnancy, childbirth or the postnatal period throughout 2010 and 2011.

## BTA invited to speak at leading Medical Conferences

In September, Lucy Jolin spoke at a debate at the **Royal Society of Medicine** in favour of the motion: ‘This house believes that birth should be pain free.’

Lucy writes: A controversial motion led to a very interesting and stimulating debate before an audience of midwives. The discussion ranged from the drawbacks of epidurals to the importance of choice before and during birth. Sadly, my view that pain relief should be a matter of personal choice for all women and not something that is dictated by ideology or the attending medical professional’s personal views proved unpopular and the motion was defeated. But events like this are great for getting the message out to midwives that birth trauma exists and is a huge problem, and it was great to be invited to argue a cause about which I’m very passionate.

On 17th of November, Maureen Treadwell addressed the **Royal College of Midwives annual conference** and urged midwives to focus on good outcomes as appraised by women themselves rather than over idealising ‘the achievement’ of natural birth.

She emphasised that while most women would like a straightforward birth in reality that only happens in about 50-60% of cases. Certainly, better support and more mobility would help reduce some complications but not all. Large number of women faces obstetric problems relating to modern lifestyle; women having babies later in life, bigger babies and more IVF and diabetes.

Accurate information is at the heart of informed consent and that respect for decision making, good communication, supportive care and a focus on good outcomes could reduce so much trauma.

The BTA were invited on to **BBC Breakfast** in November to discuss a report on the number of women opting for C-sections after a traumatic first birth.



Lucy writes: Despite having to get up at five am, I think I managed to put our point across in the very short space of time allowed on the sofa with Bill and Sian. We were very heartened to receive many emails of

support after the slot, some from women who had never heard of birth trauma before and now found that they were not alone.

### Jane Tomlinson 'Run for all'

BTA Committee member, **Rebecca Dickinson**, completed the Leeds 10k Jane Tomlinson 'Run for all' on behalf of the BTA.

Rebecca writes: I completed the 10k run in Leeds this June, raising **£210** for the BTA. I can't remember my time but it was pretty terrible - over 2 hours. I am, however, delighted to have finished it at all considering my lack of training over the past few years. I did have a marvellous day though and met some very inspiring and courageous people who I was proud to be running alongside.

Our Thanks to Rebecca for raising much needed funds for the BTA in this way!



### Rebecca Awarded PHD Scholarship

Rebecca has also been awarded a PHD scholarship from the MHRA (the UK medicines regulatory body) and the University of Leeds. She will take up studies in January and will be researching ways to improve the written information provided with medicines. Well done Rebecca!

### Running for the BTA

#### London Marathon 2010

A massive Thank you to **Michelle Johnson** who ran the 2010 London Marathon on behalf of The Birth Trauma Association.



Michelle raised an amazing **£1,105** for us, crossing the finishing line in just over 6 hours. What an achievement! Thank you so much Michelle.

### Pregnancy & Birth Magazine

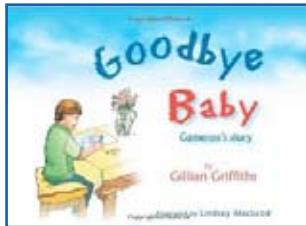
BTA Chair, **Julie Orford**, appeared in Pregnancy and Birth magazine in July for a feature entitled 'I never thought I'd... have a positive birth'. Julie was thrilled to appear in the magazine, not only to raise awareness of the BTA but also to speak of her positive subsequent birth last year. Julie writes: 'It was a long, but fun day, with hair, make-up and styling being done by the magazine which was a lovely treat! I hope the feature helped women to realise that next time round can be a totally different experience. My midwife was fantastic and gave me tremendous support throughout, for which I can't Thank her enough.'



## Goodbye Baby Book Review

ISBN 978-0-7152-0940-0

Sadly, more than one in five pregnancies ends in miscarriage, around 250,000 in the UK alone. If you have young children, explaining what has happened after a miscarriage can be very difficult and hard for them to understand.



Goodbye Baby is a moving story, told from the point of view of Cameron. It tells of his excitement at becoming a big brother and then the sadness when everything changes. The book is written so that parents can sit down with their children and read the story together when words are just too difficult to find. It covers how Cameron feels and also has some lovely ideas as to how he can remember his baby sister/brother, such as making a scrap book and planting a special tree.

Extract: *"I was worried I might forget the baby. So we made a special scrap-book. We put in the cards people sent us and I drew a picture of what I thought our baby would look like..."*

Gillian wrote the story after suffering a miscarriage herself when her son Cameron was almost 3 years old – old enough to know that he had lost a little brother or sister, but not old enough to understand why.

Gillian is donating part of the proceeds of the book to The Miscarriage Association.

A very emotional read, and beautifully illustrated. Guaranteed to bring a tear to the eye whether you have suffered a miscarriage or not. A lovely, well written and illustrated book, we would highly recommend it to anyone trying to explain pregnancy loss to younger children.

**NB: Please use the link to Amazon on our website if you do purchase this book. It costs you no extra but does earn the BTA 5% commission on your purchase.**  
[www.birthtraumaassociation.org.uk/donate.htm](http://www.birthtraumaassociation.org.uk/donate.htm)

## BTA Press Coverage



The BTA has had a huge amount of press coverage over the last few months. We contributed to an extensive article in the Guardian on 10th December by Joanna Moorhead on the impact of perineal trauma called 'Torn apart by childbirth'.

There was an immediate response to the online version of the article with large numbers of women saying how grateful they were that at long last this subject was being addressed. Our grateful thanks to Vicki, Mel and other BTA supporters who were brave enough to offer to be case studies and talk openly about the subject and its impact on their lives.

The full article is here:

[www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2010/dec/10/torn-apart-by-childbirth](http://www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2010/dec/10/torn-apart-by-childbirth)

The BTA featured in several articles about birth trauma, PTSD and tokophobia (fear of childbirth). **"The birth of Nightmares"** in the Times and **"Too scared to push: big rise in reported birth trauma"** in the Guardian. We highlighted issues that can so often prevent trauma; good communication, sympathetic supportive staff, providing good information and respecting choices and providing effective pain relief when it is needed.

## Children's Centre PN Groups

The BTA has recently been running Post Natal group sessions on the subject of birth trauma. This has been carried out in conjunction with Kesgrave Children's Centre in Suffolk.

The sessions formed part of a varied programme that mums booked on to, other sessions included paediatric first aid, weaning, brain development and crying/sleeping.

The sessions are informal and relaxed, introducing the work of the BTA, discussing the causes and effects of having a traumatic birth and also giving out practical advice on what to do next.

Feedback from mums was very positive:

*I learnt that... "I am not the only person who has been through a traumatic birth. I can have another baby and it will be different".*

## Calling all Knitters...



**Can you crochet or knit? Or do you have any spare wool lying around that you could donate to a good cause?**

A new group, **Lisa's Stars**, has recently been set up to make a difference to those who are unfortunate enough to lose a child prematurely. It is a group of caring, ladies knitting and crocheting, hats, blankets, wraps, small teddy bears etc for tiny premature babies who are born asleep.

The founder is a lady who has sadly experienced this loss and felt something was missing from the aftercare of those babies and their parents.

Lisa's Stars initially started out as a way to support the local hospital, the aim was to supply them with knitted items so that any baby born too early could be kept warm and wrapped in love.

*"Every baby deserves dignity and every parent should be able to remember their angel baby dressed, warm and cosy."* said founder Lisa Davies.

*"Our aim is to not only supply the local hospital with our knitwear but to spread them to as many hospitals as we can. Our dream is to create memory boxes for those babies and their families so they have their treasured baby keepsakes to keep for all time."*

**Find out more:**

Visit: [www.lisasstars.org.uk/index.html](http://www.lisasstars.org.uk/index.html)  
or join the Facebook page to find out more

[www.facebook.com/pages/Lisas-Stars/159738440713941](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Lisas-Stars/159738440713941)

## BTA invited to Westminster

The BTA was invited to Department of Health Headquarters in Whitehall on 28th September to take part in a workshop to explore how the new government could develop its maternity reforms.

The BTA strongly recommended that the longer term physical and emotional outcomes of maternity care be given higher priority. We also argued that women should be involved in rating the quality of the services they receive much more than they are at present.



## Twins & Multiple Births (NICE)

**Dr Kirstie McKenzie McHarg**, who was a BTA supported representative on the Twins and Multiple Birth Clinical Guideline of the National Institute of Health and Clinical Excellence has sent us the following update:

"I would like to offer my thanks to the Birth Trauma Association for suggesting that I put my name forward as a lay member of the Multiple Pregnancy NICE Guideline Development Group. We have now had three meetings, and I'm finding the whole process absolutely fascinating. So far we've learned a lot about the process that NICE follows in order to derive clinical guidance on the vast range of topics it covers, and we've started to work on the details of some of the questions that were identified as important in the stakeholder consultation process. I'm finding it very challenging to put the lay member point of view across - it's always difficult to interrupt health professionals 'in full flow' and to remind them that women experiencing multiple pregnancies have their own individual experiences at this time, and are not just 'pregnant with twins or triplets'. It's important to talk about the emotional and psychological impact of carrying a multiple pregnancy so that this remains at the forefront of their minds, and to ensure that the focus isn't always on the physical elements of the pregnancy (although obviously this remains most important!). The other members of the group are all interesting and experienced people and I count this experience as a genuine privilege."

## Birth Stories Book

**Sarah Winborn is in the process of writing a book detailing women's personal experiences of birth, with a percentage of the revenue from the book going to the BTA.**

Sarah writes...Having been through a difficult labour with my son, I have found it important and helpful to talk through my experience with others, to hear their own experiences and how they dealt with it. I am gathering real birth stories from mothers and plan to edit them into a book which will then be published. I intend to donate a percentage of the income to the **Birth Trauma Association** and I hope the book will help other women who have experienced difficult labours to realise that they are not alone, that it is also something they can learn to deal with emotionally, and to realise that if they had problems such as bonding with their child afterwards, like I did, that this was not their fault. I want the book to act as an extra friend for those who don't yet feel able to talk about their experiences. If you would be happy to contribute your own experience and/or know anyone who may be interested in doing so please could you send me through your story or pass this onto someone who may. When writing your own experience please do not worry about how you write it. Just write from the heart. As an idea, your story could include:

- A description of your labour
- How the labour affected you emotionally and/or physically
- The repercussions of the labour (ie. bonding problems, fear of going through it again etc)
- How you dealt with the negative impact of the labour (ie. talking it through with friends, counselling etc)
- Experiencing a easier second labour with sibling

I too will be contributing my own story. I would like to include people's first names and location (as stories will be coming from around the world) but if you don't want your real first name included then I can make up a name instead. Please write whether you want this or not in your email.

Please send your story or any questions to me at [sarah.winborn@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:sarah.winborn@yahoo.co.uk) with the word 'Book' in the subject line.

## Mother and Baby Magazine



Committee member, Rebecca Dickinson, was delighted to appear in **Mother and Baby** magazine in August.

Rebecca spoke about her experiences of having a second baby after a traumatic first birth and raising awareness of the BTA.

## Awareness of Accutane

We received the following message from Joe Lederman of **Drugwatch.com** an organisation that raises awareness of drug side effects:

*"We are currently working to spread awareness about Accutane, an acne medication that has been prescribed to more than 13 million people since its introduction. Accutane and the generic versions of the drug have been linked to serious birth defects if taken even in just one dose during pregnancy. Studies show that Accutane can cause miscarriage and premature birth, as well as increase the risk of cleft palate, heart defects, mental retardation, and other severe and potentially life-threatening birth defects."*

If you are concerned about any medication you are taking during pregnancy, please speak to your GP or midwife as soon as you can.



## BTA Website Visitors

June 2010	<b>8,023</b>	Unique Visitors
July 2010	<b>8,880</b>	Unique Visitors
August 2010	<b>9,075</b>	Unique Visitors
September 2010	<b>9,249</b>	Unique Visitors
October 2010	<b>9,443</b>	Unique Visitors
November 2010	<b>10,699</b>	Unique Visitors

**facebook**

Don't forget to join our facebook group. There are currently over 600 members of the group, visit:

[www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=52018411070](http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=52018411070) or search Facebook for **Birth Trauma Association**