



October 2004

Dear Dr Ladyman,

Re: Post Natal Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

We are writing to bring your attention to an urgent matter concerning women's health and human rights.

Firstly, let me introduce our work. The Birth Trauma Association (BTA) was formed in 2004 to:

- Work with healthcare professionals to change those current practices which contribute to traumatic birth experiences
- Increase awareness of this problem generally
- Provide support to women suffering from Post Natal Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PN PTSD) and to offer basic advice and support to women who are traumatised by childbirth but who do not have PTSD.

The BTA is currently the only organisation in the UK whose sole purpose is to address the issue of Post Natal Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). This is a debilitating condition which is, largely, entirely preventable and which causes great distress to women and their families, particularly as it occurs as a direct result of their childbirth experiences.

Research has confirmed that at least 10, 000 women a year suffer from PN PTSD and many more are traumatised by their birth experience but do not have full-blown PTSD. Hence, the Birth Trauma Association believes that there is an urgent need for extensive and properly funded research into the scale and nature of this problem which, in reality, represents a complex interplay of objective and subjective factors. For example, although the type of delivery has been suggested to be a contributory factor to the development of the disorder, other research has confirmed that the degree of distress suffered is often less associated with the type of delivery itself but rather with the woman's perception of control, the attitudes of people she encounters, her relationship with the maternity care provider, her feelings of not being heard, the level of information provided to her and her ability to consent to procedures.

Unfortunately, currently, some health care professionals appear to know so little about this condition that many women are frequently misdiagnosed as having Post Natal Depression and this means that they often do not receive the help they need. This is a great concern to us.

We, therefore, request, on behalf of the many women who contact us that the Government urgently address this issue and provide details of what is being done to raise awareness and to remedy those practices which contribute towards the quite unnecessary infliction of PTSD on our maternity wards.

We eagerly await your response.

Yours sincerely,

Debbie Sayers
Secretary
Birth Trauma Association