

**Submission  
No 710**

## **INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA**

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For us the birth trauma has changed so much and forever. My wife has a bilateral levator avulsion. It is one of the worst birth injuries one can have. There is no surgical solution and pelvic floor exercises have very limited effect because the muscle has been torn off the pubic bone. Because the pelvic muscles are gone or partly torn my wife suffers from organ prolapse, which is when organs drop into the vaginal cavity. It's bad enough now, her bladder and rectum are pushing down and are just behind the vaginal entrance (Stage 2). The next step is where organs start coming out. You wouldn't wish that on your worst enemy.

Obviously, it is harrowing physically for my wife. Mentally, it is equally terrible:

- Firstly, my wife could not carry our children or toddlers for any length of time even when they were babies. I did most of the carrying. I can see this has impacted the bond between my wife and our children. Babies/toddlers need to be with their mums a lot but they are denied this because of injuries suffered by mothers. Babies are delivered safely most of the time but it is at the cost of their emotional wellbeing because their mums are left permanently injured, incapacitated and cannot look after them properly. The impact extends beyond the baby phase. My wife cannot fully connect with our kids because she is limited in the physical activities she can do with them. Our kids see me as the go-to for such activities. This effectively affects/removes a very large component of bonding opportunities between a mum and her kids. We can clearly see this gap forming despite the fact that my wife was very active and sporty, and tries to remain that way as much as possible.

- Secondly, how can you possibly prepare mentally for your organs to come out of your body?! With no viable surgical solution to my wife's injury, it is a matter of when, not if. When it does happen, what do you do? Get surgery that you know will not work and may leave you in even greater pain or discomfort? Live the rest of your life between your bed and the couch? For active people like us, it feels life would be over. In our view there can only be one solution: a viable surgical remedy. How far is it? Will we see it in our lifetime? Considering the lack of research in this area there is actually no hope right now. It is depressing. To think that women end up in this harrowing situation simply by giving birth and that virtually no one (with a few isolated exceptions) is bothering fixing such injuries is scandalous. It is a pure affront to women, it is using them as disposable beings when there are the complete opposite. Their children need them more than anyone else, yet we leave them as damaged goods, diminished beings unable to connect with their kids properly.

Our future is now life becoming worse progressively, there is currently no hope of things getting better. Isn't hope keeping humans going when facing adversity? How do you keep going when there is no hope?

With the physical issue my wife is facing, sexual interactions are very hard to contemplate. It hurts, the vagina doesn't function anymore. This side of our relationship is no longer. The intimacy that comes with has suffered greatly too. The desire, attraction, sex drive has completely left my wife's body, it is absolutely gone. After 6 years, we haven't worked out any viable replacement yet, i don't know if we'll ever be able to. I definitely remain attracted by my wife so i make every effort to avoid looking at her or thinking of her in a sensual way because i know there is no point and leads to feelings of frustration. A wife/partner should be the last person to think of in such a way.

We are strong and my resolve to stick by my wife and the kids is rock hard. But men in different mindsets, values and couple relationships could be led to leave their wife and kids because the changes are so profound you have to rethink and reinvent your relationship. Many say kids will do that to couple relationships but this is next level. It is an overbearing imposition on the couple, it is relationship-shattering material that has and will continue to tear families apart. The children are collateral damage. We welcome them to the world only for their core support group to be torn apart. If this is not a tragedy I don't know what is.

Obviously, the management of my wife's injury is omnipresent in our budget. Dealing with ill-health is something the majority of people do at certain moments of their lives when bad luck strikes. For us it is a constant, almost daily thing. Bad luck has struck on that birth day and is staying with us forever now. My wife does all the exercises that are currently known to western medicine to somewhat help in managing levator avulsion and organ prolapse. This involves going to pelvic floor specialists and exercise therapists on a weekly basis. It adds up very quickly and will be forever. The cost will go up as she gets older and needs even more medical support. This makes it impossible to quantify our future expenses but I expect the sums to be astronomical in the end.