

Submission
No 1178

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 15 August 2023

Partially
Confidential

Hi, to the reader,

Did you know that a woman doesn't even have to go through birth trauma firsthand in order to be traumatised?

That's right – I am unmarried, childless, and terrified of what I have seen, and have planned my future births down to the T.

I did not believe I should be part of this submission, but you know what, I so am.

I have put off family and births because of this trauma culture.

My experience with coercion and lack of informed consent started with visits to my ex-GP Dr.

I was effectively told that I could not have the contraceptive pill without a pap smear (this term was still used pre-2017), because she did not feel 'comfortable'. She would harass me every single time, including when Gardasil came into the picture, even when I went to consult her about separate issues.

I was 18 when I first visited her. There were many points of contradictions that I eventually plucked up the courage and pointed out, including the PTS that the experiences gave me. I did keep going to her because I didn't know any better, until I did – some 7 years later, after peers my age became GPs themselves.

Then I wrote a letter, demanding an apology. I met with her and the practice manager at the time. To their credit, and my right, I received apologies verbally and later, in writing.

I later visited a male doctor who left me alone in a consultation, most likely to ask a nurse whether I could avoid a pap smear, when this is an elective exam! He returned saying '...well, if you change your mind...'.

Why cannot doctors just accept 'no' for an answer and trust one's sovereign bodies? I know that they will be there at the first chance they get if women changed their minds, but how about staying with 'no' for an answer without pivoting?

This got me thinking, if this could happen to women who aren't pregnant, what happens when we are?

This was 2008. I have been reading about this topic for the last decade and a half, plus working in Sydney Local Health District (because of a lack of jobs elsewhere) in their HR Workforce department. I learnt about doctors at [redacted] who only do C-sections; I learnt of still-fragmented midwifery group care – hailed as great, I learnt of 14 babies being born there in 2019 (I mean, why so little?!), I learnt of cascade of interventions, of more coercion, of systemic sanctioned abuse.

I became aware of just how difficult it was to de-register a doctor.

I also learnt of Term Breech Trial at [redacted], I learnt of two midwives being required to be present (regardless of comfort levels of women), I also learnt of endless cases where physiological births are regarded as special.

The medical field has never been, and never will be, the centre of births, midwifery and women. I know of many women, older and younger, who talk nothing positive about births.

I know of many women who are told to go with the flow, or throw out their birth plans, why? Because their care providers could not stand with them in the fiery pits of the spirit of childbirth.

Witness her – if a woman does not look like a goddess during birth, it's on the perpetrators.

One would only need to read about court cases in the United States to know the extent of the trauma – the U.S. has the highest mortality rate of mothers and babies in the developed world. Read into those cases of forced episiotomies (which are nothing but system sanctioned genital mutilation), and nurses holding down a woman just because a doctor was yet to arrive.

Let the woman do what she is built to do. DO NOTHING. OBSERVE AND RECORD.

I had decided long ago that I will be having homebirths, regardless of whether midwives are present. I would have those few midwives and doulas who put individual women at the center. Truly.

And I will have no qualms to fire them, should they turn on me.

If the intent of this submission is to get funding for PP physio/pelvic floor sessions, forget it. Work on changing the culture. Work on standing up to OBs, call out abuse, truly make a difference, instead of hearing our stories and paying lip service, and bypassing the fact that these injuries are inflicted at the hands of perpetrators who are protected by the system, falsely solving a problem that they themselves have created.