

Submission
No 1004

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Ms Janani Waterston

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Partially
Confidential

To whom it may concern,

I am writing this as a submission to the Select Committee on Birth Trauma.

I believe that it is important to consider both sides of the coin to assess a situation – what aspects are done well, and which require improvement. My story is not one of Birth Trauma but quite the opposite and I wish to make mine and my family's experience known so that others too can have something similar.

Our daughter was born last year on the 13th of August – lucky 13! I initially approached pregnancy and birth clinically. Too many Hollywood movies make the process sound painful and terrible. I assumed birth will be painful and wished to be provided with as many pain reducers as possible during the process. My pregnancy was classed as “low risk” and I chose to follow the public healthcare system, so I was referred to a local midwifery group – Midwifery Group Practice (MGP).

It was here where I met – our midwife. I remember asking her at my first appointment how many medical interventions I can receive to reduce the labour pains. A few weeks later, I attended one of the information sessions the MGP held for expecting parents via Zoom. This is where I was introduced to the writings of Dr Sarah Buckley who advocates for approaching pregnancy and birth as a natural process wherever possible without any unnecessary medical interventions.

My fear of birth came from a lack of understanding and knowledge. So, from the date of this meeting, I started to learn as much as I can about the process. The more I learned, the more I realised that there are many benefits to having a drug-free natural birth if possible. So, my husband and I decided to give a natural birth process a go.

During my pregnancy, I turned up with a list of questions for to answer at every appointment. We discussed all my concerns, and I learned even more from her. She was patient, kind, and gave me the confidence in my body that I desperately needed. My husband and I also attended a Calmbirth course run by . too was amazing and being a doula, was full of knowledge and suggestions on our birth preferences. She helped us understand our likely decision-making process during labour along with the pitfalls. She gave us the rest of the confidence we needed to approach birth naturally.

attended when I went into Labour at 's Birth Centre. It was long and tested my patience. I used the breathing techniques taught me during her course. was wonderful. She always made me feel like I was in control of the situation. Nothing was done to me without my consent. Discussions were open and she was compassionate. I felt completely at ease with her. She was also a great source of comfort for my husband.

We got the birth experience we wanted. We managed to deliver drug-free and seamlessly without any complications. A few big pushes and she was out! I always believed that it is near impossible to study the exact circumstances of birth and have a single recipe for success – every mother is different, and every baby is different. Every pregnancy is different. There are too many variables. However, is almost one now and she is just thriving. She is intelligent, confident, coordinated, compassionate, fun, happy, and gorgeous! We cannot help but feel that , and team and the decisions we made during pregnancy and birth had a lot to do with how wonderful she

is doing so far. We were lucky enough to have met [redacted] and [redacted]. These two women clearly have dedicated their lives to helping women through childbirth and helping them make more informed decisions. [redacted] and [redacted] gave us the confidence to question everything and make decisions based on benefits and risks. It saddens us to hear that so many other families have had traumatic births. Women are strong but it seems that society can make us think that we are incapable of giving birth so medical interventions are necessary.

So, I wish to make our experience known to as many people as possible so they too can see how wonderful it can be. If you want to see a model that works to set benchmarks, look at the [redacted] MGP. We attended the [redacted] MGP birthday celebrations earlier this year at a local park. We met hundreds of other families who also had wonderful birthing experiences. It can be done.

A natural birth process may not be an option for all families. But informed decision-making and feeling in-control of any situation during the birth process can be an option for all. Healthcare workers should seek to educate and listen to patients wherever possible so the communication channels can be opened. A bit of compassion can go a long way.

I am attaching a few pictures of our happy [redacted] for your reference, so you too can see the evidence of a wonderful birth experience.

Thank you for reviewing my submission and best wishes.

Regards,

Janani Waterston