AIMS For a better birth...

Give Birth a Chance

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To the tune of 'Give Peace a Chance'



Lyrics by Jo Dagustun, with thanks to John Lennon for the inspiration!

Intro: a 1, a 2, a 1234…

Verse 1

Everybody's talking 'bout:
See your midwife, check your blood
Test your pee, anti-D
SPD, PGP
How's the size, how's the lie?
Screen to check it's what we want
2, 3 or 4-D scan?
See your little man...

Chorus

All we are saying, is give birth a chance…
All we are saying, is give birth a chance…

Verse 2

Everybody's talking 'bout:
When's the birth, must be soon?
EDD? You're overdue!
Just a little sweep, thank you
Fresh pineapple, curry, sex,
Take a walk. Your time has come
Water's gone? infection!
Placenta failure coming on
You will need an induction...

Verse 3

Everybody's talking 'bout:
Waters breaking
Ringing up
Come on in for monit'ring
Contractions stop
Not in labour, that's a fact
Go back home, manage on your own
Wait until it's very late
Ignore the lights -
"I don't care, I really need to get there
I think I'll need a wheelchair..."

Verse 4

Everybody's talking 'bout:
Tens machines
Pethidine,
Diamorphine
"Where's the pool?"
Paracetamol
Gas and air, epidural, spinal
"Just knock-me-out..."

Verse 5

Everybody's talking 'bout:
Labour's stalled, mum's exhausted
EFM, augmentation
Decelerations, mum can't cope

Baby's stressed, what a mess
"Just get my baby out!"
Get her prepped...

Verse 6

Everybody's talking 'bout:
Hold it there, don't push dear
A little snip, breathe this way
Want to push? Well now's ok
Give a great big push now dear
The baby's here!
A little jab now, placenta out
Some clinical waste there to chuck out...

Verse 7

Everybody's talking 'bout:
Baby's blue, what to do?
Cut the cord, give it here,
Get it breathing, special care,
"Skin-to skin?" Not right now
You just rest and you just trust in us my dear…

Verse 8

Everybody's talking 'bout:
Sore nipples, poor latch
Tongue tie, infected breasts
Cannot cope with nipple thrush
Hungry baby, anxious mum
"How d'you know they're getting some?"
This is rough
Go and buy the fake stuff...

Verse 9

Everybody's talking 'bout:
Won't sleep, cries all night
Put him down, he fights and fights
"I need a break" - I leave to cry
Can't bear to hear
Don't worry dear
It really is a good idea

No co-sleeping here...

Final chorus, repeated until done…

These lyrics are possibly one of the most authentic outputs of my PhD. I don't claim to have any talent for song writing, but with a little work I think they could well be a useful addition to the birth activist rally song book. If my lyrics resonate with others, it would be great to hear them sung. It's such a great tune, if nothing else.

I recall that the lyrics were fairly easy to write; they developed in my mind as a result of sitting with women, one to one, and listening to their telling of their birth experiences. I was hearing things that I hadn't been expecting or looking for, and it was impossible to ignore it. Once I started to put pen to paper, the words flowed. Later, I tried to do some work to ensure they 'scanned' ok, but even with the help of a friend I found this tricky.

Whilst it might not always have been notable to the story teller, what I heard very powerfully as I worked on my PhD, was repeated stories of a maternity system that is unable to support women to have a straightforward birth. As I have continued my work in the maternity service improvement community, I see that this isn't a historic issue. I think these lyrics represent that truth, in a way that I hope will speak to many.

I think we can do better. As service users, I strongly believe that we should expect a taxpayer-funded maternity service that both supports us well when pathology rears its head, but also works hard to ensure that the system doesn't divert us from a straightforward birth, where that is our choice. Is it really too much to expect, where it is our decision based on access to good information and support, to expect the system to be constructed in a way that gives the physiological process of birth a chance?

Author Bio: Ex civil servant, social geographer and mum of four, Jo Dagustun maintains her interest in health policy and practice via her roles as a volunteer in the AIMS campaigns team, a tutor for The Brilliant Club and a public co-investigator on an NIHR funded study. You can find her PhD thesis here https://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/18031/1/Dagustun_J_Geography_PhD_2017.pdfand get in touch with her here: jo.dagustun@aims.org.uk