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Salli with granddaughter, Amara

By Salli Ward

Well, that's the pandemic done with then... Obviously not, and its shadow is evident in many of the articles in this Journal. Nevertheless, a more familiar maternity topic – induced labour – takes centre stage in this issue and presents us with a mystery: why are women and birthing people distressed, damaged and distanced when they beg for an induction *and* when they determine to avoid one. What does this accumulative distress and damage do to our cultural perception of birth and to our hopes and expectations?

It's been a long time since I gave birth and I'm concerned to see that many of the same issues are around, some having got worse, despite research, campaigning and legislation. On anecdotal evidence – the stories told by my daughter and her friends who have young children – I am saddened, but it is a sadness compounded by the objective and meticulously examined data collected here. It makes me angry that I haven't created a better world than the one in which I gave birth.

Perhaps, you may think, I am not solely responsible for the mess? I did my best – I birthed 3 children at home, left my bloodied pants in the sink though the doctor had specifically said that's what she didn't like about home births; I acquired 5 step-children born without intervention (my husband has a habit of marrying stroppy women); those kids were brought up knowing that the birth they choose is their right –

and yet my strong and sorted daughter still fell into a trap – and her friends even worse. No, not all of them, of course, and some supporters, tutors, birth partners, midwives, doulas and doctors still worked wonders – by not pushing the wrong birth on the wrong person, and by smiling, supporting, soothing that baby into the world.

So no, it's not all my fault. It's no one person's. And does it even matter? What matters is surely that we work to turn the tide. This is only my second Journal as an editor, but I have an image in my mind of every word of every article piled into a huge, mighty wall of stacked Journals, metres thick. So tough and strong that the waves roaring and hitting it turn and disperse, weakly trickling away. To break the metaphor, we have to build a world where anyone giving birth feels not controlled but confident, not bamboozled but buoyed, not patronised but powerful.

To this end, [Nadia Higson](#) opens this edition with clear and straightforward facts about induction. [Lydia](#) and [Sarah](#) then each tell very different stories from their own experience of giving birth. [Joy Horner](#), retired midwife, reflects on the changing practice she has seen in her lifetime, covering everything from induction to shamanism in birth. [Our poetry writers](#) gift us with sweet, sorrowful and striking tales. Sticking with creatively expressed information, my editorial mentor and vastly experienced colleague [Alex Smith](#) talks about three mythical sisters embodying very different qualities that determine how they approach birth. [Alex then accompanies Katherine Revel](#) to appeal for volunteer support on the vital AIMS Helpline.

[Faiza Rehman](#) introduces us to her dynamic Raham Project, which addresses the need for specific birth support for birthing parents of Black and Asian heritage. Two articles from the AIMS Campaign Team sandwich a reflection on research events by [Georgia Clancy](#). The first of the Campaign articles, by Jo Dagustun, reports on her [interview with Sarah Fishburn](#), and the second comments on the [new NICE guideline](#). This is followed by [Anne Glover's](#) review of the much acclaimed Australian documentary 'Birth Time'. After this, [Sarah Hawkins](#) shares her experience of searching for the elusive information about the implementation of Continuity of Carer, before student midwife [Megan Disley](#) reflects on action taken by March for Midwives.

The AIMS Campaign Team gives us two further updates; one looks at research on the causes of [race inequalities in birth](#), and the other takes us back to '[Better Births, six years after it came out](#)'. [Gail Werkmeister](#) reviews three books on the induction theme before we finish with the [Campaign Team's round-up](#) of their news and activity.

We are very grateful to all the volunteers who help in the production of our Journal: our authors, peer reviewers, proofreaders, uploaders and, of course, our readers and supporters. This edition especially benefited from the help of: Megan Disley, Julie Milan, Anne Glover, Caroline Mayers, Julie Ann Crowley, Josey Smith, Maddie McMahon, Jo Dagustun, Gulliver Hubbard, and Danielle Gilmour.

We really hope you will enjoy this issue. In our next Journal coming in June we will be exploring the concerning issue of obstetric violence.