

WHO CAN WE TRUST?

Mother, yoga teacher, birthlight tutor, and founder of InJoy, [Rosanna Kalliabetsos](#) provides an insight in to the reasons why advice varies so much from midwife to GP or obstetrician; she advises on how to support your clients to make informed and empowered decisions about their pregnancies, births and their babies' health

ANY expectant Mum realises quickly that advice from those involved in her antenatal care varies greatly. This can impact on her decisions relating to the care she takes during her pregnancy and also in the choices she makes regarding the birth of her baby. Common scenarios include: 'My GP has prescribed me iron tablets'; 'The midwife told me my baby is measuring too small'; 'My GP told me I should eat dairy products for calcium intake'; 'They want to induce me at forty weeks, as my scan

shows my baby is big'; 'My consultant said that because my baby was conceived by IVF, I should have a caesarean.'

Why do opinions vary so much, and how can a woman navigate through the conflicting advice, so she can make decisions confidently about her antenatal care, the birth of her baby, and beyond?

The main issue is perspective!

Modern medical care is routine and prescriptive. Time isn't available to spend preparing the woman emotionally for her

mothering journey, so the focus is on testing her to see if her body is performing as it should. The dots are not yet connected between how she feels emotionally and what her physical state is. Medical equipment has been proven to be unreliable (forty years of WHO research has shown this), yet we still rely on the data from scans and monitors despite their fallibility.

Obstetricians who work in labour wards are only called to a birth if there's a complication. Their focus is on saving lives, not on the long-term impact on

either mother or baby of procedures and treatment administered. So they see birth as dangerous business!

Trainee doctors receive one day's study in nutrition, and obstetricians receive no instruction on the natural effects of oxytocin, other labour hormones or how to help them flow. If labour isn't progressing quickly, then 'hook up a drip of synthetic oxytocin' - that's their solution! Neither, is it taught that the position a woman births in can affect the descent of her baby. Many obstetricians don't consider that the birthing environment can significantly alter the course a birth takes.

Standard midwifery training teaches to rely on technology, rather than instinct, to tell if everything is okay - and these days they are trained more as obstetric nurses than as traditional midwives. For a student midwife to qualify, she is required to attend forty births. Some don't ever see a birth centre birth (where medical equipment is not available) or a home birth as part of their training. Many end up, like doctors, being scared of birth, and particularly, of litigation.

Hospital policies dictate what can happen and when, and these are determined by insurance companies. Who do insurance companies consult regarding writing policy terms?

Medical advice does not ratify natural remedies, ways to encourage babies into Optimal Foetal Position (OFP) for birth, the role of adrenalin and oxytocin during labour, the impact of fear on baby and mother, or the positive effect that emotional support can have on all outcomes.

So, how do we support women to make informed and empowered choices around birth?

As a woman learns to trust herself and her baby, over the voices of well meaning but fear driven 'birth professionals', she comes into an empowered place to prepare for birth and parenting. This can be accessed through a combination of body-based, audio and visual education as cellular memory re-awakens.

Sharing with women the knowledge around how we are shaped by our early experiences in life, by media and



our cultural norms, helps women to understand their fears and concerns better, and to take responsibility for changing them and the birth choices they make. 'Change your view of the world and the world around you changes'.

Medical advice has its place, and evidence-based clinical studies too, but it's difficult to measure in a clinical environment the positive impact had on a birth that a soft nurturing environment, and a loving team who trusts the process of birth can have, even when women are 'high risk'.

Some simple tips that can make a huge difference for your pregnant clients include:

- Looking into the birth stories of both parents in as much honest detail as possible - what is made conscious no longer runs as a subconscious program: Check out [birthingfromlove.com](#) for overcoming fear of birth.
- The more she reads up on routine procedures, both in pregnancy and birth, the more informed she is to discuss her care options with her antenatal care team.
- If you do not ask for anything different, you will be pushed through the system, and the language used by some individuals can infer that you do not actually have a choice. This is not true!
- Remind women that they know best what is right for themselves and their baby. Meditation, relaxation and yoga can help women to get in touch with what feels right for their baby.
- What is prescribed by your GP during pregnancy isn't necessarily the best thing to take... it will be the cheapest! Look into alternatives and spend the money where you can.
- Go on a 'negativity diet'... news, scary movies, mainstream birth documentaries, thrillers or scare mongers are not worth listening to!
- Independent midwives, doulas and home birth midwives will have the most rounded understanding of holistic pregnancy and birth - join forums online and local home birth groups where available.
- Get to know your body intimately - what makes you feel open, relaxed and comfortable. Antenatal yoga classes are a great way to do this.
- Use resources such as [primalhealthresearch.com](#) and [aims.org](#) to get a balanced view of suggested and routine procedures.
- Medical knowledge is limited - painkillers do not get rid of bad postural habits that lead to back ache, pelvic pain and sciatica. Neither will support belts, massage or physiotherapy, if women do not pay more attention to how they sit, stand and move around.
- More than anything else don't give your power away! Look online for positive birth stories, videos and documentaries that will help you to understand how beautiful and empowering birth can be.
- Ask your baby what she/he wants... and learn to trust what you feel. You may dream or just know what you need to do.
- Consider what you would do if there was no one around to advise you. What feels 'good' is a guide to follow throughout your parenting journey.
- Check out [babiesknow.com](#), to understand better the impact of your decisions on your baby. ■