

Misguided care

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DR PETER DUNN'S statement (February 16) that some childbirth practices are "absolutely, disastrously misguided" makes interesting reading, coming so soon after the publication of the Board of Health report *Mother and Baby at Home*.

Given the small number of home births and the excellent statistics for outcome of labour and birth, it seems extraordinary that such at-

tention is paid to home birth while we have these "absolutely, disastrously misguided" practices continuing and probably increasing in maternity hospitals.

The last Board of Health report on maternity services was published in 1976, though it had been completed a number of years earlier. It seems clear that we need a more comprehensive look at our maternity hospitals and their practice. Perhaps a committee of inquiry, such as that which looked at Oakley, should be set up so that the consumers of health care can have an impact on the methods and standards found in maternity care.

Women know that lying on their back is the worst way to give birth and that intervention procedures such as forceps and caesareans follow from this. We also know that routine shave and enemas, episiotomies, sedation, induction, formula feeding, nursery care and unfamiliar staff are "absolutely disastrously misguided."

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