

We killed our healthy baby

Devastated: Corrina, 21, and her partner Brad, 25, aborted their unborn child believing it had a genetic abnormality. Picture: AARON FRANCIS

Couple claim fetal diagnosis was wrong

A WOMAN aborted her healthy son because doctors told her—wrongly—the boy would die of a rare terminal genetic abnormality.

Corrina, 21, and partner Brad, 25, say they have gone through hell since they ended their son's life at 12 weeks.

The Melbourne couple still mourn DJ, their fetus named after Brad's father, Douglas John.

They sleep beside his ashes in their bedroom.

Corrina was told her baby had rare Menkes disease — which killed her toddler brother.

"I had a termination... I lived through it, but for a long time I wanted to die," Corrina said.

Months later, she was devastated

when, she says, she was told the original Menkes diagnosis was wrong.

She is suing two Melbourne hospitals, an international genetic clinic and the Government of Denmark, where some tests were performed.

Corrina's lawyer, Anne Shortall, of Arnold Thomas & Becker said her case was one of the most tragic and unusual.

Corrina wants the hospitals, clinic and diagnosticians to guarantee this will never happen again.

Her younger brother Shane died from Menkes disease, which causes retardation, many health problems and a shortened life span.

"Shane had no life, was in pain and couldn't cry," Corrina said. "I

couldn't put another child through that."

Menkes disease (also called kinky hair disease) affects boys and is caused by genetic mutation or passed on by a mother as a carrier. It affects the copper levels in the body and is indicated by high copper levels in DNA and other tests.

When Corrina became pregnant she feared for her unborn child because her mother and sisters were carriers of the disease and "there was a good chance I was too".

"When I was pregnant with DJ, I thought, 'if it is a boy, I can't let him be born as sick as Shane was,'" she said.

"I was only three, but I remember them taking my little brother, Shane, away, slipping his little body up in a bag — he was only 18 months old.

"I asked the experts to promise me they would put in place some protocols so this mistake would never happen again.

"They wouldn't, so I said 'I'll see you in court'."

Ms Shortall said that during Corrina's pregnancy the Royal Women's Hospital's genetics department carried out tests on the fetus.

She said experts at a genetics institute in Denmark were consulted and a sample was taken from Corrina's fetus using a kit supplied from Denmark and locally provided saline solution.

"On September 23, 2006, Corrina underwent a termination of pregnancy on the basis of the doctors' advice that the fetus was affected by Menkes disease," Ms Shortall said.



Ultrasound: A scan of DJ in Corrina's womb.