

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

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Partially
Confidential

22.10.2021

32 weeks pregnant, I had a doctor's appointment, this was my first appointment with doctor , every experience I had with other midwives and doctors was extremely positive, I loved being pregnant and the whole experience with the clinic, my first encounter with she was stand offish and rude, she weighed me as soon as I walked into the office, at this point I think I had gained 7-8kg my whole pregnancy, she proceeded to circle the recommended weight gain for my BMI and said "you're pushing the recommended weight gain, so, try not to gain any more weight." "Bigger people can struggle to give birth vaginally and usually result in a c section." "If that's your plan to give birth naturally, try be careful not to gain any more weight." "You want your baby to be healthy don't you?" I left this appointment and sat in my car and cried.

04.11.2021

34 weeks pregnant, this was my second doctor's appointment with Doc , the student midwife was also present at this appointment, this was my first appointment my partner attended also but he was running late due to work, (I had it planned that if I was to have the appointment with her I would decline being weighed because I was scared something more was going to be said) I did have doctor for this appointment and as soon as I walked in she requested I stand on the scales (I got nervous and just did it) I gained a further 300g, she said "you've gained 300 more grams, you'll need to try not gain more weight." I said something at this point and told her she was being insensitive and I left the last appointment crying, I asked if it wasn't recommended I gain any more weight tell me how, and that I struggle to find that realistic as I'm growing a child. She ignored me, asked to do my obs, she proceeded to be blunt the rest of the appointment, at the end of the appointment she wanted to discuss my plan for the birth, I told her I had no plan other than wanting to wait for spontaneous labour and having a vaginal birth, she proceeded to ask me to book and induction multiple times, I was feeling pressured and asked if it was okay if we wait and if we get closer to my due date we can book then, she said they don't like doing that because there isn't many spots, I continued to tell her I'd like to wait, she then proceeded to explain the risks of induction including the likely chance of an instrument being used to assist in the delivery, and the chances of it turning into a c section were quite high. I apologised to for saying something and she said it was okay and agreed to being insensitive. Both my partner and myself left that appointment feeling pretty confused, it felt like an induction was trying to be forced but the risks felt like it was way too dangerous.

17.11.2021

36 weeks pregnant, this was my last appointment with doctor , there was another doctor present at this meeting who I don't believe worked in labour and delivery, had asked him to do my obs, fundal height and babies heart rate, she didn't talk to me at this meeting, the only interaction was between herself and the other male doctor where they talked about their weekend and how they didn't enjoy working in ICU because they'd rather the patients that can have a conversation with them. ended the appointment by telling me everything was looking great and I can see the midwives from now on.

15.12.2021

Labour and delivery. I was induced via balloon catheter for no medical reason, the doctor I saw on the 14.15.2021 for my 40 week appointment ended the appointment with “okay, time to book an induction.” No questions asked I felt defeated and that I had no other choice, the induction was booked for the same afternoon due to it being the only available slot. The placement of the balloon catheter itself was fine, the student midwife as well as an experienced midwife placed it. I was then given pain meds and a sleeping tablet for night. The next morning at 8am I was taken to the labour ward and my waters were broken using a new method “the finger hook” the student midwife was doing this and it took a few minutes to actually break my waters – he later joked with my mum about the experience and said how awkward it was for him. Between my waters breaking and my emergency C-Section the experience was fine. my baby’s heart rate was dropping and they called the emergency button. was in the room at this point I don’t remember her coming in, I remember noticing the oxytocin Drip as it was bumped from 90ml/hr to 1500ml/hr and shutting it off completely and her saying ! What have you done, you need to watch your lines, they’re labelled for a reason.” I then had 2 male midwives give me vaginal exams with consent and then a male OB do one also without consent, then presented to my bedside and told me it was time for an emergency c section, there was no sympathy, I asked who recommended that and I wanted to speak with them not her, she rolled her eyes and went and got the doctor (whose name I can’t remember.) he was sensitive and empathetic. I agreed to do it, stood by me and read through the risks of the c section with no care and getting me to sign the paperwork, the C-section went well.

By the night midwives were doing their rounds, the whole ward had heard what happened I had two midwives tell me I needed to seek legal advice and I need to take things further.

The next morning the student midwife debriefed with me, it was extremely hard to listen and he blamed be for the experience it was full of “you should’ve had the epidural” “we knew you were going for a C-Section eventually” “your baby was just too high up and posterior it was never going to happen vaginally” “mistakes happen” 5 men and doctor came to do a formal apology stood behind the other doctors with her head down and didn’t look at me, never apologised for what happened was then told “there is no reason you can’t attempt a VBAC next time, as long as the baby isn’t as big”, . There was a lady admitted beside me who said she had nothing but rough dealings with also.

My pregnancy was positive, enjoyable and healthy, I was excited for labour and to be a mum, I loved myself and my pregnant body. Although every encounter I had with doctor made me feel small and re think the above, and that my baby wasn’t going to be healthy because I was a bigger person, it made me terrified to be induced and in some way I prepared myself for my labour to end in a c section due to my weight and the induction, all the risks that had warned me about. was not friendly she was not approachable and I felt I couldn’t ask question.

I completely understand the things did tell me where “by the book.” However I wish she was more sensitive instead of the “you need to stop gaining weight” I wish it was “now I need to tell you this but let’s discuss your exercise and your diet and we can figure out a way to control this.” Instead of the “here are the scary truths.” I wish it was discussed more lightly, she seemed bored and dramatic, it felt like the scary truths were inevitable. I still cry at how

insensitive she was towards me while reading the list of risks when having a c section, it was rushed no eye contact, no "it'll be okay." "We'll look after you." I was coerced abused and made feel ashamed and at fault for my experience.

All my rough dealings with _____ made the incident feel intentional, my partner strongly feels it was intentional, it feels she made up my mind for me, I was to have a c section.

I'm angry, I am scared, I am sad. I am angry that I didn't speak up sooner, that something so preventable still happened, I am scared to have another child and that this may happen to another person who may not be as "lucky" as myself, I am sad I feel like my decisions were taken away from me, that my positive attitude towards being a mum and labour and delivery was hindered by _____ words, actions and how emotionless she was towards an exciting experience.

My baby is now 19 months old and still lay in bed awake asking myself if I could've done something different or said something sooner to prevent what happened, I'm being active in writing this in hopes no one else is put through a similar situation and obstetric violence and birth trauma can become less prevalent.

I am currently pregnant and hoping for a home birth and VBAC – I am spending so much many and most of my free time educating myself and my whole experience could have been completely avoided, the more educated I become the more angry and upset I become, I do not trust hospitals, I do not trust obstetricians, I do not trust modern day statistics and medicine, I do not trust the text books. A change needs to be made.

Thank you for your time.