

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

In 2012 I suffered a traumatic birth with my son. After 24 hours of labour pains we presented to the labour ward. I was still only around 4cm dilated so the midwives put me in a warm shower to ease the pain and ran a bath for me. After some time in the bath I requested for them to reheat it but I was told no because I could overheat the baby. It was close to 48hours since I'd had any sleep at this stage and I started to drift off in the bathtub. I woke to a midwife coming in to the bathroom urging me quickly out of the bath as it was at this stage freezing cold and I was shivering uncontrollably.

I have no idea how long I was left alone in the bath for. They put me in a warm bed to rest but I was still in quite a bit of pain so I was offered the gas and air as pain relief. I was checked in the morning and was fully dilated so they broke my water to move things along. I was in active labour and pushing for around 2 hours before a doctor came to check progress. The vacuum extraction was unsuccessfully attempted several times. They then offered me an epidural as by this time I was shrieking in pain. The epidural was unsuccessful. They then attempted a forceps delivery however this was also unsuccessful. At this stage I was prepped for a cesarean section.

I had a spinal block which was successful and the emergency cesarean was performed successfully however the doctor performing the operation explained to me that she had burnt my skin in two places with the instruments used. I believe the burns were caused by the diathermy instrument but no further information was given to me and it was not recorded in my file or medical report of the birth. The wounds from these burns were significant, one on my upper inner thigh and the other on my outer labia and I was given no treatment in hospital for these wounds. The wound on my labia became infected post birth and required antibiotics from my GP at my check up. I have two scars from these burn wounds. My son was born with a large circular abrasion on his head from the many failed vacuum attempts. Midwives commented this abrasion was quite significant as it had broken the skin on his head. They could not tell me if it would have any long term effects on him. He spent his first night in the nursery hooked up to heart monitors which had a huge affect on our initial bonding time as well as breastfeeding. I was taught how to hand express colostrum to give to him but he failed to latch. It took an agonising 3 months of expressing and using a nipple shield before he would latch on his own. Lucky I'm persistent because breastfeeding was a traumatic experience in itself.

The whole time I was in active labour and pushing, my mum, sister and mother in law were kept out in the waiting room and ignored when they enquired what was happening. My partner was not included in any decisions made and basically shoved to the side. At one stage he couldn't handle it anymore and went out to the waiting room and broke down crying and my family thought either the baby or I or both of us were dead. He suffered greatly after witnessing what I went through and at no time was he offered any support for his experience. It had a big effect on our relationship and our attempts to have more children. We did conceive two more children and I opted for elective caesareans with them as there was no way I was going to put anybody through what we experienced the first time around. My second birth was a routine scheduled cesarean and there were no complications. My third birth was classified as an emergency cesarean as my water broke at 38weeks, one week before my scheduled cesarean date however there were no complications and I never reached active labour.