

Submission  
No 66

## INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

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Partially  
Confidential

I was pregnant with my first child and decided to go through the public system, with the hope there would be no complications. My obstetrician was going on leave the day my induction was planned. My induction was planned for 41+3 weeks as the baby and myself were still tracking healthy. I went into labour the day before the planned induction, so arrived at hospital. I was seen to the birthing suite and for the first 12 hours of labour, I was told I was tracking well at 8cm. I was regulating my pain management with gas and overall felt in control of the situation.

The step in obstetrician then arrived and measured me to only be 6cm. This disappointment put me back mentally and I began to lose control of my pain. I requested an epidural. It took two hours for the obstetrician, who was also the anaesthetise to return to the hospital to perform the epidural. He asked if I was ready and the midwife laughed. At this point I was howling with uncontrollable labour pains. The doctor then attempted the epidural four times, and proclaimed the fourth attempt was successful. All four attempts were brutally painful into my spine, and none were successful. They moved me onto the bed like I was meant to be numb from the lower spine down. Nothing has changed, I still felt everything and moved everything. They inserted the catheter. They ultrasounded the baby, he was not dropping and there was nothing to be seen in ways of an obstruction. It wasn't for another six hours that the decision was made to perform an emergency cesarean. I was in labour for a total of 25 hours. 13 hours of them with no progress expect pain escalation.

In the theatre room I was asked to move myself to the operating slab. Keep in mind they told me the epidural worked, so I'm not sure why they thought I could move myself over? But I did, because it obviously had not worked. They started prepping my body for the incision while the obstetrician was attempting to pump a spinal block into the SAME epidural line. There must have been about four attempts to pump the spinal block drugs into my body, all of which I could feel the cold running through my body but it was not having the correct affect. This is because the epidural needle was never correctly inserted. As they continued prepping my stomach, I was screaming at them that I could feel everything. They eventually decided to put me under a general anaesthetic. I woke up two hours later in horrendous pain and a newborn thrown at me by the midwife. She pushed my son into my nipple which caused ongoing damage for the following 12 weeks.

I was wheeled away into my own hospital room and left by myself with my newborn, shocked and scared for my life as my body felt weak and my air ways felt abstracted. It was only the constant check of the midwife (who was from a different hospital and filling in), that she noticed my mood. I was angry, enraged at how my labour unfolded and how little control or care was given to me in the second half and final moments of labour. It was only because she asked, that she organised for the obstetrician to come see me the next day. Otherwise I would've been left to myself.

The obstetrician arrived in my room and said 'I hear you were disappointed in how it turned out'. There was no admission to his failures or acknowledgement of the trauma I experienced. I spent five nights in that hospital without any sleep. The staff were inattentive and offered little to no support in my recovery or struggle to care for my newborn. I was left for the most part on my own in a tiny room. I begun to hallucinate from lack of sleep and was sent home with no additional mental support. I tried to place a complaint in the following weeks, instead I was given a session with the counsellor. Feeling defeated, I left it at that.

I did not bond with my son for six months, I suffered through flashbacks, depression and anxiety. I had suicidal thoughts and my marriage was breaking down.

I sought professional help which helped me deal with my trauma.

I now suffer anxiety for any surgical event and suffer ptsd symptoms when returning to hospital.