

Submission
No 73

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

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Partially
Confidential

I gave birth to my first child in _____ Public Hospital in June 2020. I entered the hospital at 7am, after going into spontaneous labour in the early hours of the morning. I was young and healthy, at the end of an all the way low risk pregnancy. After receiving an epidural at 5cm we were left alone and only checked on intermittently, based off an assumption based time frame of how long it would take. 3 hours later a midwife arrived to perform a cervical check and to her surprise, I was 10cm. They waited another hour before coming and telling me it was time to push. After one hour of this, they weren't happy with the 'lack of progress' and it was at this point an obstetrician was bought in (& her student doctor.) The OB said she would like to put a hand on the babies head, to try and pull him down as I pushed- I consented to this. Another half an hour later, in her words she said 'I am just going to put a little suction cap on babies head to give me a bit more help getting him out.' This was not framed to me like a question, ZERO risks were displayed to me and at no point did she ever use correct terminology that would have been 'vacuum extraction.' I was never given the chance to provide INFORMED CONSENT. I very clearly remember asking over and over if my baby was okay and the answer kept being yes. I was so unsure as to why this doctor was being so forceful to my body and my baby, but it felt like I never had an opportunity to say no, or yes, or much at all. Another midwife 'had to be in the room' at this point, because of the procedures being used. But I was never told honestly that it was because these procedures could in fact be dangerous. As the OB prepped and was ready to perform this vacuum assisted delivery, she looked up and simply said 'if you see me grab the salad tongs, don't panic!' And dove straight back into my vagina. Again, NOT a question and ZERO consent gained. Let alone the disgraceful use of slang to downplay the seriousness of a birth tool that can have severe implications.

My baby was born and I suffered a postpartum haemorrhage, the rushed and forced removal of my placenta causing a large wound on my uterus- resulting in the need of an iron infusion, IV and then oral antibiotics. My recovery was slow and extremely painful, which just sums up the physical side. The mental challenge of wondering how this all became so aggressive, was eating me up. The way I was spoken to really made me believe that maybe they had done the right thing.. then I talked to more birthing people and got more educated on the topic at hand. I had been riddled with birth trauma. Trauma that stuck with me right into my second pregnancy. Trauma that manifested into antenatal anxiety and depression. Trauma that grew into suicidal thoughts around my body and my unborn baby inside of it. These thoughts and feelings didn't end until I had given birth again and I work tirelessly in healing, in the hope they won't come up when I have a third child.

Birthing people need so much more from our system.