

**Submission
No 78**

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

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I was 26 when I gave birth to my son. I had a perfect labour and came into the hospital in the early hours of the morning on the 26th of August 2015. I was already 8cm dilated.

I was part of the MGP initiative at my local hospital and had a lot of personal care. I sought out information, diligently attended my birthing classes, and did my research. When completing my birth plan, I took on all the medical advice provided to me without too much questioning. No one informed me of the possibility of postbirth complications.

I had a fully retained placenta after a water birth. My midwife pulled upon my umbilical cord and it came out clean and there was no placenta. There was some bleeding in the tub, but not much more was mentioned. My midwife moved me to the hospital bed and dried me off. My minutes-old baby was handed into my husband's arms and the doctor was called.

Up until this point in time, I had only received gas. The doctor came into the birthing suite, put on gloves and proceeded to tell me cervix had now closed. She told me to keep breathing the gas. She put my legs into stirrups after I had just given birth and had a grade 2 tear. She manually reopened my cervix with her hands in an attempt for a manual extraction. She did not succeed. I passed out from the pain and was awoken by the medical staff. I remember seeing my husband holding my son and I believed I would die.

The medical forms later revealed I had haemorrhaged 1.5L of blood. This was never conveyed to me by any medical staff.

The pain that I endured cannot be summed up into words that can truly convey my despair. I was told to sign forms, with words like "hysterectomy" used. No explanation was provided because we "needed to proceed quickly."

I was placed in theatre and had a spinal block. The placenta was manually extracted.

I was in hospital for five days. I was told I needed a blood transfusion when I moved to the wards. I did not receive one until the next day, when I collapsed next to my husband. I was told it was not done because doctors and nurses did not pass on information to the staff replacing them after their shifts had ended.

I received no debrief of what had occurred. I received no mental health care after my first child. I suffered from nightmares for months afterwards.

Two years later, I had my daughter.

I suffered PTSD and perinatal and postnatal anxiety. I cried all the way through my second pregnancy. My husband and I celebrated the expulsion of my placenta more than the birth of my second child.

I was diagnosed shortly after when I struggled to find joy being a mother. I underwent 14 months of mental health care to recuperate.

Please help these voiceless women.