

Submission
No 103

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

In 2020 I gave birth to my daughter at _____ Hospital. She was my first.

I was lucky enough to be included in the Midwifery Group Practice, who I attribute to such a positive pregnancy and labour experience with health care professionals.

I elected for an induction at 40 + 6 weeks.

I was labouring for 10 hours before transitioning. When I reached transition, at 9cm dilated, the obstetrician decided to turn the syntocinon off because I had progressed. The midwives began filling up the bath for me to attempt the water birth I wanted.

Once I was pushing, is when things began to change.

My husband describes the 12 hour day as calm and peaceful, except for the last hour, which was just frantic.

After 2 hours of pushing, the obstetrician was called back to the hospital.

I was moved from the bath onto a bed, on my back, and my legs put into stirrups. This is where the discomfort and trauma really sank in. I am a little person and those stirrups are not designed for people of my size. I felt like I had to put more effort into holding up my legs than I did pushing out a baby.

The obstetrician had decided they wanted to intervene. They stated they were going to give me a nerve blocker injection and do an episiotomy and use instruments to bring my daughter out. I remember feeling scared in that moment. The phrasing of what was happening to me was never phrased as a question or a choice. There was no informed consent - they would state to me what they were doing and assumed consent.

As a first time mum, my first time going through labour and birthing a child, no one explained to me that I had a choice over what happened. No one explained that I could say no to anything.

The doctors did not explain to me why they wanted to perform these interventions. I will never know if it was for the benefit of my baby, or just due to hospital policies on time frames.

The doctors gave me the nerve blocker injection, and from that I did not need an episiotomy or instruments to be used as my body pushed my baby out myself - the way it should be.

While in my vulnerable moments, I could not verbalise or express what I was thinking or feeling - however internally I was thinking to myself that I could do this. I never reached a point of feeling like I couldn't do it. I was trusting in my body and my baby and that every push was stretching my body in the way it needed to get my baby out with minimal damage. My empowerment was stripped from interfering doctors who could not even take the time to explain why they wanted to intervene - or provide options to myself or my support people. They did not once ask for consent. They made me feel rushed and like I could not rely on my natural instincts.

After birth I was grateful I had done it myself despite the doctor. I had given birth to a healthy baby, my daughter did not need any medical assistance after birth.

My next issue which raises fear and trauma - is doctors decided to give me antibiotics and clexane. It was only after I got home with the medications and the inserts that I saw for the first time the lists of side effects and warnings - with the scariest being "do not use while breastfeeding". There had not been any discussion around what they were pumping through my body while cannulated and there had been no discussion around why I was being prescribed these medications. The antibiotics were described as "precautionary" - to which I had side effects of feeling foggy headed, unable to talk, I felt my breathing had changed, and I felt like I was going crazy. It was after I stopped the antibiotics - before finishing the dose - that I felt clearer again.

In any birth debriefs I had - be it with my midwives, or with the obstetrician herself, no one could give me a real reason why the end of my birth had gone the way that it had. They had only described it as "you were tired and your contractions weren't lasting long enough to push her out". This comment made me feel furious that our system allows doctors to take away a birthing persons rights, without real understanding of how we think or feel. With no medical indications.

I came away feeling like I had been put on their clock and my time was up, therefore I became just another number and they needed to wrap it up.

The common theme in my birth was there was no information given to me. No discussions around why things were being done a certain way, and there was no options provided. Consent was always assumed and never asked for or informed. I came away from my birth feeling taken advantage of, without closure, with a long list of questions I will never have answered.

In preparation for my second birth, I have spent \$834.48 out of pocket on weekly psychologist appointments to work through my trauma associated with the birth of my daughter.