

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

To whom it may concern,

I have had 7 births - 5 of those in NSW hospitals. I am well acquainted with what good maternity care can look like. Of those 5 births, I experienced birth trauma with three and all in Hospital in the last 5 years.

I experienced disrespectful treatment during the pregnancy of my twins (6th and 7th children so I know how to give birth). My birth plan was laughed at and I was constantly pressured to have an induction and epidural. Towards the end of the pregnancy they would not let me leave the appointment until I had agreed to let them book an induction. I called and cancelled the induction but then was told off for missing my induction appointment when I arrived in labour. Throughout my very smooth natural twin delivery I was pressured to have the interventions and monitoring they wanted. That including attempting to bully my husband to make me do what they wanted while my first baby was crowning. I was glad to receive an apology for their treatment of me after the babies were born, but I am very conscious that had they not been my 6th birth I would not have had the courage and confidence to stand up against them and would likely have had a far more complicated twin birth. They did not trust me at all to make decisions about my body and my babies, and did their utmost to scare and bully me into what their ideal birth looked like.

My other birth trauma event was a few years previous with my fourth child. The midwife did not want me to labour in the shower or move around and kept trying to get me to move to the bed. She was annoyed that I did not want internal examinations and so said it was up to me if my baby died and let me labour alone. The birth was quick and straightforward but afterwards she kept telling me I had to hurry to feed the baby, although he was alert and fine and taking his time. She took him off me without asking to clean and weigh etc. and I felt very disrespected as the mother. Finally - and this was what I lodged an official complaint about - the other midwife brought a needle to inject synotocin for a managed third stage (placenta delivery). When I told her I did not want a managed third stage and did not want the injection she took full advantage of me being on my back holding a newborn and injected me anyway saying that that's just what the hospital did. This led to problems with the placenta which I am very confident would have been avoided if I had had a natural third stage as I have had with my other children. I was then left for four hours waiting for the doctor to come and do the stitches for my significant tears, only to be told on enquiring that the midwife had 'forgotten' to alert him to come. I firmly believe this was due to how annoyed she was with me for not having the birth she wanted me to.

Mums, especially firsttime mums, should be empowered by midwives in their ante-natal care to make their own choices and be supported for whatever birth they choose. They should be given the option of choosing another midwife if they have one who is not listening to them. And in all births time should be given in the hours after the birth to explain what happened, why interventions had to be used and for sincerely apologising for any mismanagement. This was healing after my twins birth and stopped me from feeling the need to officially complain.

I also had to repeat to multiple midwives and doctors my birth plans and have to defend them over and over. There should be a continuity of care model in every hospital so a new mum only sees two or three midwives and one doctor. There is also a real need for community midwives to manage the ridiculous wait times - I waited six hours heavily pregnant for a scheduled appointment at one stage at [redacted] A midwife sent out to my town once a fortnight would significantly help the crush at [redacted] in the ante-natal clinic.

Thank you for looking into this significant problem, at [redacted] hospital at least.