

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 28 July 2023

Partially
Confidential

My name is _____ and I had a C-section in 2017, under the 'care' of private OB at Hospital. I had twin boys, and it was my second pregnancy. At that time, I had a two year old son in what was a 'normal' birth at _____. It was a positive experience and I had no expectations except for respectful treatment, which I very much received that time around.

From the outset of the second pregnancy, I had a negative feeling about the care - my name was never remembered at the appointments, we would wait an hour and hear about the OB's fertility work, personal life and interest in sport, his moods dictated his interest in my pregnancy. The most valuable experience was his nurse and receptionists. I should have changed OBs at that point, but like many women who give birth, I felt I couldn't trust my own instincts. Although I don't necessarily regret having a C-section, the OB's autocratic opening statement to me 'twins, you know you're having a C-section right?' should have been warning enough.

It was a difficult 37 weeks but I made it to the planned C-section and I was huge. I was in constant pain, I couldn't really walk because of the weight on my abdominal, and I couldn't sleep. I hated looking up because I was so embarrassed by my size and people would approach me to ask questions or remind me how huge I was. My entire vision had tunnelled down into that moment of birth - not with expectations of it being a beautiful experience, but being free of this pain.

I hadn't slept at all the night before the delivery. I was so nervous and scared. I dropped my eldest son off, and arrived at the theatre.

The OB upon seeing me, asked my name. He then introduced me to the nurse as _____, 'the nervous one.' I was scared, and tired and huge, but there was so little awareness of this, or any humanity in his approach.

We went into the theatre, and the OB began to blast deafening operatic music, while I was repeatedly injected with drugs by the male anaesthetist. I was so bloated as it seemed they weren't working. The OB was beyond disinterested, occasionally interjecting inappropriate statements. They finally started discussing putting me under and I was just this piece of meat - never did they speak to me, console me, discuss my treatment, except to rudely tell me to calm down as I cried.

I did not want to be knocked out so I finally agreed that the drugs were working, and I felt the pain of the whole thing. The anaesthetist then apologised to the OB for the mismanagement of the drugs, and I was reminded that I was just a body; not a real person, and this wasn't my birthing experience after a traumatic pregnancy. All that was present in the room was their ego. I knew it was wrong at the time; I wanted the music off, and I wanted to be respected

but I felt like I could say nothing - I remember thinking, don't say anything; just a slip of a knife or a mistake and he could destroy your life.

My sons came out healthy at 7kg between them, as well as the two placentas. I asked not to hold them there. I didn't want to associate my first moment holding or seeing them to be associated with that horrible room, delivery and man. I waited until recovery - even now, when I feel distance from my twins, I wonder if it's because I didn't hold them immediately as I did my eldest. I was robbed of that and I felt I did everything 'right' - I carried them for 37 weeks, suffered for them, went through a system which I thought offered 'superior' care, and I was robbed of that moment which I will never get back in this life. I feel I failed them, even though I know I logically know that it wasn't my fault that I waited, and I didn't stand up for my rights to be treated with humanity.

I know you are likely to read far more traumatic birth stories, and I acknowledge that but even to this day, I experience extreme stress and panic attacks in hospitals. A year after the birth, I wrote a letter to the OB describing my experience with him, and he replied to apologise.

I appreciate the gesture but that's all it is. I will never forgive him or get that time back. I would hope that such a story and my lingering feelings of sadness about what I now see as a feat, is lost to me.