

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 28 July 2023

Partially
Confidential

Water broke July 29

Called to receive advise. Presented to hospital. Admitted and given antibiotics.

By August 5 started having contractions. I was told repeatedly I was not in labor. By midwives, nurses and dr. I was told to remain in bed so not to bring on labor. My partner found me an exercise ball which helped with contractions and comfort. A nurse removed it and told me to stay in bed. I called several times for help saying the pain was happening every ten minutes (I was keeping track of my pains) they offered vaginal exams and ctg. According to both I was not in labour. I was told they were not contractions but rather I had an irritable uterus. Also had blood and mucus discharge. Was told not in labor and offered endone to relieve my irritable uterus symptoms. I repeatedly said I did not want endone. However nurses and doctors all advised me to take the meds to ease my pain. So I would take it when pain became too much. I tried to remain active walking. Told again to stay in bed. Overnight when asking for pain relief a nurse told me my baby would be born high on endone and I would not want that. She then put in a referral for a physio since perhaps my pain was muscular. I no longer asked for help or called nurses. I began to sit in shower for hours to ease pain. My partner was not allowed to stay overnight with me. The nights were the worst as I was alone and in pain and no longer felt like any medical professional would help. I felt insane and weak. That I couldn't even handle this fake pain that I would not be able to handle labor. After five days my baby was not growing (according to scans. My baby was already flagged as IUGR so at risk). That morning I had a scan. By the time I walked back to my room (which took a while as I had to stop frequently to deal with my "irritable uterus" pains.) the doctor walked in and said we'll have the baby today and left. Nurse came in and had no idea so I had to tell her I thought the dr wanted me moved. Anyway I went to the delivery suite. The midwife there began to do an exam and I had my "irritable uterus cramp". She said that it was a contraction. I told her I had been having them every ten minutes for five days. She said "oops". Somewhat vindicated I proceeded to use techniques I learnt in calm birth class and was finally allowed to use (such as the massage and exercise ball.) I was monitored on a ctg. When given pitocin I had another contraction and my baby was shown as in distress. (When reflecting the ctg reading appeared the same as previous CTG readings when I was told I was not in labor. Which suggests they were read incorrectly. I will be requesting my medical records to understand better what happened.)

When flagged that my baby was in distress we were given the option of a non planned c section. I was told if I attempted to continue a vaginal birth, and my baby was in distress, they may not have time for an epidural so I would be out under general anaesthetic and not conscious for the birth. We asked for time to decide. We decided to proceed with a c section. Reflecting we were not given any indication as to why our baby may be in distress. Or the accuracy of a ctg as a monitoring tool. However at the time the thought of being unconscious when my baby was born was heartbreaking. I also knew she would be rushed to NICU. I did not believe I would be able to hold her once she was born. I was not going to miss her birth.

The c section was fine. The staff were respectful, supportive and kind. They spoke to me about what was happening, and told me I hadn't failed at birth.

Once my baby was born she was taken to NICU. My first photo with my baby is her being taken to NICU while I reach out trying to hold her. My wife went with her, as planned. I was taken to maternity ward. With no baby. Perhaps the cruellest part of my treatment. I sat in a

ward surrounded by new parents and their babies. I had no partner with me and no baby. I know they take some women to antenatal ward (while I was there I made friends with other women who had given birth but were not in the maternity ward as their babies were in NICU or special care). So I sat, alone in bed, waiting for the recovery time to pass until I could see and hold my baby. I waited five hours before I could hold my baby. At no point was I told I could see her earlier. No medical staff gave me updates or helped talk me through what would be happening with her.

Recently I met with a private obgyn who took me through my birth notes. She explained that my daughter had gotten “stuck” in the birth canal and had the cord around her neck. At the time no one told me this.

Overall my treatment was not malicious or physically violent. Rather lack of staffing, lack of continuity of care meant that no one had time to understand me. I was given conflicting and judgemental medical advice, both to take and not take endone. I felt unheard and gaslit into believing I was not in labor. I felt no alternatives to a c section were provided, only the suggestion/threat of a missed birth due to general anaesthetic. Individually staff were lovely, and some took time to hear me more than others. However as a whole without continuity of care and without appropriate staffing, I was lost and mistreated.