

Submission
No 159

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

For my first baby, throughout my pregnancy I was seen by the team at hospital. A cervical fibroid was discovered at my 19 week scan appointment. I was told at this time that I would need to have a planned c section to birth my baby as the fibroid may cause complications like rupturing/bleeding, which would in turn affect my birth. This concerned me greatly, so I asked to speak with a manager. They gave me the same information, they encouraged me to come to terms with the fact that I need to have a c section and to prepare. I would need to have multiple internal ultrasounds to monitor the size and positioning of the fibroid also. The size and position didn't change throughout the remainder of the pregnancy. But I was still told to have the c section.

As far as I knew, that was what I had to do. I didn't know that I could decline the planned c section delivery, and I didn't know I had rights in terms of making my own informed decision. I didn't know that I could deliver spontaneously, and possibly vaginally. I was devastated that I wasn't being able to experience a 'birth' or a labour. It felt so odd to know that I was going to have a baby removed from my body when it suited the medical team. It was very hard to wrap my head around these concepts, and I did a lot of work on myself to acknowledge my feelings and succumb to the reality that I wasn't 'birthing' this baby. So I was booked for a c section at a time and date that suited the hospital schedule etc, and had my baby. She was healthy and I spent a lot of time working slowly on my recovery over many months after the birth to ensure my body was going to perform physically as best it could. I entered my 2nd pregnancy with insight into how the hospital system works. I realised I was coaxed into having the first baby by planned c section out of fear and misconceptions. I leveled up, I got informed and I felt comfortable in speaking up for what I wanted regarding this birth plan. My cervical fibroid showed up on my scans again from 12 weeks. It was closely monitored until I was sick of going to ultrasound appointments and I stopped at 36 weeks.

The fibroid was the same size as previously and was in the same position. I declined the planned c section when it was suggested as my only mode of birthing at the hospital. I said I am going into spontaneous labour and I will try to birth my baby naturally, vaginally. I had many staff members checking in with me throughout my visits to antenatal to ensure I knew what 'risks' I was putting myself and my baby up for. I understood the potential risks and I understood the small percentage chance that they would/could occur. The risks themselves are dangerous, but what the hospital staff don't share is the percentage chance that they can occur, because while the risk is there, it is at such a minuscule amount that I was happy to try for spontaneous vaginal birth. I knew I could choose to have an emergency c section if there was a complication, and I would be birthing at the hospital, so care would be available. I was made to feel silly in my decision, I was not listened to by most staff at antenatal, I was scared to talk about my reasons and my feelings to choose this type of birth plan as the staff would run me through the risks again and instill fear in me. I would

leave my appointments in tears and feeling not confident and not heard. Each time I would go home and work on myself, I would use my support network to build up my confidence again and to feel good about my choice to birth on my terms. This cycle would repeat after each hospital visit. After week 38, I didn't go back for any follow up appointments. I felt like it was too late in pregnancy to feel the pressure and judgement of the hospital staff, I was over it. So I skipped my 38 and 39 week appointments.

I went into labour at 39 weeks + 4 days, and had my baby very easily, I had short labour, I was confident in my birthing preparation and delivered a 4kg baby without any intervention, it

was a beautiful, natural birth and completely hands off as I had requested on the day. No issues with my fibroid, and no risks endured!