

Submission
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INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

My name is _____ and I unfortunately carry birth trauma. I gave birth in 2022 at the _____ Hospital.

When I first became pregnant, I had reached out to a midwife friend and her recommendation was to get into the MGP. I asked my doctor about this, and she said that this did not exist in _____ and that GP shared care would be the way to go forward. It wasn't until later in my pregnancy (around 36 weeks) that I had a midwife at the hospital, tell me that this wasn't the case. My GP actually had worked at the hospital and knew that it did exist. I believe that my GP at the time lied to have a continual source of income during my pregnancy.

My pregnancy was very smooth other than a bit of morning sickness. My waters broke at 41 weeks, the same day I was booked in at the hospital for an appointment to book an induction for the following week. I still attended my appointment that morning, and the doctor sent me up to the birthing suite, so that the CTG could take place, and confirm if labour had begun.

Baby was doing fine, and there were no signs of labour, but as I have had PROM (pre-labour rupture of membranes) I was told that I needed to be back at the hospital by midnight to go on antibiotics and to be induced if labour hadn't begun naturally. Thankfully, I began to labour around 1 pm that day, and I laboured at home until 7 pm at which point I thought it was time to go to the hospital as I was in a great deal of pain. At the hospital I consented to a VE and was told I was possibly 2 cm dilated, but as I was due to be at the hospital at midnight they wouldn't send me home

The midwife that booked me in didn't stay for long, and it was only upon using the call button that another midwife came into the room to administer gas at my request. I don't remember this midwife introducing herself and other than giving me the gas, I never saw her again. At around 10 pm, there was a shift change and I was introduced to my new midwife. We were then left on our own, and unfortunately, I was physically sick over the floor while I laboured. The rest of my waters broke in the hospital room floor during a contraction. My husband called for a midwife to assist. I was in a great deal of pain and the tens machine along with the gas, were is no longer working, and I requested an epidural.

The third midwife (the one who did the nightshift) organise this with consent to a vaginal exam. She confirmed I was 4 cm dilated, which was in her words 'perfect timing for an epidural' and a request was made to the anaesthesiologist. This was performed by 1 am, and I rested on the bed until shift change the next day at 7 am. I was asked to swap sides every hour.

At the time of shift change (7am) I was apparently 9 cm dilated and thought I would be meeting my baby very soon. As I was hooked up to the CTG monitor, they believed that my contractions had stopped or my labour wasn't progressing as I had hoped, so I was started on synthetic oxytocin. The midwife had extreme difficulty getting the CTG to accurately pick up any contractions or the heartbeat, something I think that contributed to the final outcome.

Over a 4-6 hour period, this was increased to the maximum amount possible as the midwife was not comfortable as the contractions had not progressed to her liking. The midwife consulted with the registrar on call at multiple intervals throughout the morning. One point,

I was told I was fully dilated by the midwife, however, the registrar that I was only 9 cm at the same time. During this time, my left leg swelled up, and I couldn't lift it from a seated position. (this is not noted anyway, in my medical records from the hospital.). After a period of time, this resolved itself, however, I believe this also contributed to my final outcome.

At approximately 1pm, I started coached pushing with the midwife. A second midwife was brought into the room to assist, and I felt things were progressing well. I was told by the registrar that they were concerned that the baby's heartbeat wasn't recovering during the contractions, and the doctor decided that I was not suitable to deliver in the room, and then I would need to go to theatre for a trial delivery by instrument.

Flurry of people entered the room; I couldn't tell you who is there. I was naked on all fours bent over, trying to push my baby out, while the register shoved the C-section consent form in my face for me to sign. My signature from the epidural consent form and the c-section form are very different. That form was the only discussion around the risks with regards to a C-section. At no point did any of the doctors or midwives, give us time to discuss, or ask questions about our situation.

It wasn't until after the birth, and I have done my own research that there are significant risks involved with completing a C-section when you are fully dilated. In addition to the horror of being naked above, I was encouraged to keep pushing with my contractions, whilst I was taken down to theatre.

I continue to push while I was in the elevator, being pushed through the halls of the hospital, while waiting outside the operating theatre, and inside the operating theatre. My husband was brought to my side after I had been placed on the operating table.

The head doctor used a kiwi cup for three contractions and while descent progressed on the first two, nothing occurred on the third so he decided it was time for a c-section.

The anaesthesiologist on-call administered in epidural top up. During this time, the overeager registrar was asking the on-call doctor whether he could start to cut yet. At this point, it hadn't been confirmed whether I could still feel my abdomen or not. I remember the doctor giving directions to the midwife on how to push the baby back up the birth canal for delivery.

The head doctor, then checked again as to whether I could feel anything in my abdomen, and unfortunately I could on my left side, the epidural top-up had failed. I was then put under general and my daughter was delivered within two minutes. There was no discussion held at any point in time about the effects of general and a delivery under this.

My daughter was handed to my husband within five minutes of her birth. However, her right ear was cut by the doctors during delivery. I sincerely regret not bringing this up with the doctors at the time once I had come to as their words were 'you are alive, and so is your baby'.

I came to in the recovery area after about an hour, however, the nurse who asked me would not provide any information regarding the birth of my child. We have decided to keep the sex a surprise, and I was in tears and incredibly upset that no one was willing to provide an update

or comfort me. I had been through 26 hours of labour to be knocked out, wake up disorientated and alone and have my baby delivered without me being present.

The midwife came and got me told me that my husband had not find out the gender because he wanted to keep it a surprise. However, this midwife ruined the surprise on the way up stating 'are you ready to meet her?'. The midwife had also slipped up to my husband during the time when I was unconscious and ruined this for him. We had waited 41 weeks to find out the gender of our baby and a careless midwife ruined this experience.

I was taken back to the labour ward where I had my own room, which I was thankful for, and my husband could stay overnight. The midwife who was brought into my room when I began pushing wanted to debrief with us. I stated that I wasn't ready for that, and her words were 'well too bad. I need to get this done now.'. Whilst I understand that the hospital was understaffed and employees were working double shifts to cover, I had been through a traumatic experience and was not ready to discuss this outcome yet.

The next day, the registrar came in to check on us and again muttered the words 'you have a healthy baby and you're alive, that's all that matters. Unfortunately, skull was bruised with the use of the vaccum. We were told that this would disappear within six weeks. At our checkup with the GP, she said the lump was there for life now. If we had been educated by the Doctors about all possible birth avenues, we may have decided differently.

I don't believe I had a fully processed what happened with our baby's birth and 10 months later, I still haven't. Over the coming days, I had wonderful midwifery care until the day I was discharged.

Our baby had difficulty latching on my right breast and my husband requested the assistance of a midwife before we left. The lady who came to assist us was not a midwife, she was a nurse assisting on the floor due to minimal staffing levels. She did provide a nipple shield which assisted, however, when I was feeding, I was patting her bum. This nurse told me to stop because the baby didn't like it, this nurse had been in the room for less than 15 minutes.

Overall, I placed far too much trust in a system, which I believed had my best interest at heart, however, upon reflection, and after reading the medical notes made by the hospital, I don't believe this was the case. The four weeks of antenatal classes provided by the hospital were not sufficient to educate any woman on birth. They focused solely on a vaginal birth and breastfeeding. There was nothing covering off on a Caesarean section and possible complications.

Staff were overworked and were not able to provide the care that they want or that a birthing mother deserved. As a consequence of this experience, I am scared of what will happen with our next child. I wanted nothing more than to birth my child vaginally and I believe that the midwives and Doctor's reliance on CTG compromised that.

I also developed an infection in my scar and attended the hospital multiples times (ED + Rapid Care) and the staff were incredibly helpful, kind and compassionate.