

Submission  
No 178

## INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

**Name:** Name suppressed

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Partially  
Confidential

Below is my birth story, transcribed by my midwife 3days after the birth of my first daughter

Before I share that, I would like to note that the main issues for me were that the hospital only had one registrar working because it was a weekend. The consultant obstetrician was not called in to help when he should have been (this was admitted to me in a review meeting at Hospital with the consultant obstetrician and the head of midwife services. This meant I was left to push with inadequate pain relief for two hours. If the consultant was called in to assist, this would not have happened. I would not have desperately asked for forceps if I wasn't left alone to push without enough pain relief. I just wanted anything to end the process as I was in the most pain I'd ever felt in my life. The registrar was named . She had no bedside manner and did not listen to me during or after the birth. When I told her to stop violently pushing my stitches during her postnatal examination she said I needed to see a social worker as I was emotionally distressed. Actually, I was physically distressed from her rough examination with no pain relief.

During my recovery and my second pregnancy, the damage done via the episiotomy and 3rd degree tear resulted in me losing control of my bowels in public on more than one occasion.

There was also no continuity of care in the public physio therapy and I saw three different physios before deciding to do private physio to avoid having to retell my birth story every visit.

I did a review with the consultant OB and head of midwife services.

Story Taker:

Story Taker Position: Clinical Midwifery Specialist

Story by collected in her home on Wednesday /2020 following the birth of her baby daughter on Sunday /2020 by forceps sustaining a 3A Tear and a 2.4litre post partum haemorrhage.

I started having contractions on Friday but slept well Friday night and they came back on Saturday. I went into the hospital at 10pm and was hooked up to a monitor in the assessment room. The midwife examined me and said I was 4cm dilated. She also said the baby was posterior. The baby must have turned, as I had not been told she was posterior in any of my ultrasounds or fundal height measurements. The midwife had some concerns about baby's heart rate and the registrar doctor came in. He informed me that if her heart rate dropped consistently, the safest option for myself and baby was an emergency Caesarean section.

I used a TENS machine with each contraction for the first hour or so at the hospital. The pain worsened and I started using the gas around 11:30pm to cope with the pain. I also used the shower, but this interfered with the baby monitor so I was instructed to only have water on my back. The midwife broke my waters around this time.

Due to the heart rate changes in the baby and the monitor being less reliably attached due to the water, an internal monitor was placed on baby's head. At around 2am (I think at the same time as I got the internal monitor), I was examined and told I was 5cm dilated.

I was told I wasn't progressing very well and I needed to have a drip with the syntocinon to get things going. The midwife said the pain was going to get worse with the drip and suggested that I consider an epidural. Because I was so tired and in a lot of pain I didn't feel like I could cope so said yes to the epidural, even though it was something that I didn't really want to have.

The Epidural went in and the drip was started and I was able to rest for a few hours.

When they checked me a little while later the midwife said I was 9 and a half cm. I think the syntocinon was increased at this point to finish the dilation. At 7:30am the midwife checked again and said I was fully dilated but the baby's head was not in a good position. She said we would wait for an hour for the baby to get into a better position before starting to push.

After the hour was up I was checked again and was told that the epidural needed to be turned down and the syntocinon turned up to give me sensation to push. They turned the epidural down from 8ml to 4mls. It didn't take long for the pain came back. I started to push with the help of the midwife. She was really good at directing me to push and said I was pushing really well. The contractions became more and more painful and I was finding it hard to keep pushing.

During the next 30 minutes or so, the epidural stopped working completely and I was in a lot of pain. The midwife left the room but every time she did I was in so much pain I had to call her back with the buzzer. I asked if they could put more medication in the epidural but she said the doctor needed to do that and that doctor was busy attending to another patient. This went on for a long time. I became more and more desperate, asking for gas, forceps or the ability to stand or walk to help the pain. She said the decrease in the epidural was still necessary to push and that I couldn't stand or walk because my legs would not be strong enough. I'm not sure how long this went on for as I was in a lot of pain. I said I needed the forceps to help get the baby born. I was crying and screaming for help as the midwife had left the room. The midwife seemed to be hamstrung, like she wanted to do something but her hands were tied. I just wanted the pain to stop. She kept saying only the doctor was authorised to use forceps or increase the epidural. I kept buzzing her to get the doctor but she kept saying the doctor knew she had to come to me but was busy with another patient. I felt so helpless. I wondered what it would take for the doctor to come to me. I kept pushing with each contraction, and some of these were without the midwife's help as she was not in the room. I found this part scary as I was still learning how to push and in lots of pain.

Still with the internal monitor, heart rate seemed irregular at times. I could see the heart rate numbers changing but I didn't know what they meant. I was worried amidst the pain that the doctor couldn't come and help because I didn't know if was ok.

It felt like the pushing was going nowhere as I could see my reflection in the glass panel and could not see the head crowning. I couldn't feel any progress with the baby's descent and the midwife said to keep pushing to get the baby over the hump. I heard midwives say things like the baby being +1 and -1 but I didn't know what this meant.

At around 10:15am the doctor came in and I asked if I could have forceps. She explained the risks and said I would need an episiotomy. I was upset and scared but I still wanted forceps so

the doctor helped deliver the baby with the forceps. This part was still very painful and I kept pushing. I didn't realise I would need to push even with the forceps. I kept saying I was still in pain but the doctor said "it is pressure not pain". There was a lot of people in the room when she was born and I was so happy to have her out and be given the opportunity to do skin to skin.

It then took 2 hours for the doctor to do the stitches. It was really uncomfortable as my legs were in the stirrups. I asked a few times if I could move my legs. I was also still in pain and told the doctor and she said it was just pressure not pain. The doctor kept saying she was almost finished but would then continue on. She repeated she was almost finished for about an hour. She needed lots of sponges to soak up the blood.

Afterwards I was moved to the ward. Later that afternoon the doctor came in to check the stitches. It was the most pain I have ever felt. She was not gentle at all with her examination and the area was very tender. I was crying and inconsolable, asking her to stop. She continued and kept putting pressure on different parts of the stitches and said "does it hurt here?" and each time I cried out "yes! Please stop!" She kept going and saying "I'm sorry, just checking, just need to check. Otherwise we need to go to theatre if something wrong". I was crying a lot and very distressed. The doctor seemed confused as to why I was in pain because she said the stitches were not swollen. She said she would refer me to the social worker because of my emotional distress. This made me more upset and distressed because I felt like my pain wasn't being taken seriously at all. My minister's wife came in and sat with me for a few hours and I was so grateful to have her there and someone to talk to to take my mind off the pain. The minister took home and tidy out our home while he was able to have a shower.

I understand that the tear and the forceps happened and that the forceps were probably not the reason for the tear. What I don't understand is why I had to wait for so long for the doctor when I was screaming in pain. I wonder if had I been in the private hospital or if I had my own obstetrician would the same thing have happened to me?

#### Main Themes

- Delay in care
- Inadequate pain relief in labour and in postpartum perineal examination