

Submission
No 213

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

I was booked in at _____ Hospital for an induction on the afternoon of the 1st of march 2023. My baby was due on the 23rd of February.

I arrived at Hospital and was introduced to the friendly midwifery team and doctor on call. I had my husband with me as my support person. They explained the process of what would occur, however, I felt that I was given very little to no agency over my say in the process (ie, whether or not I was comfortable with an induction at 41 weeks, and if I would prefer to wait another 4 - 5 days for the labour to occur spontaneously).

I had my labour chemically induced by the doctors and midwife at about 5pm on 01/03/23, and then was made to be comfortable for the next couple of hours. By about 7.30pm, I had started to feel extreme discomfort as the contractions started. I began to feel more and more contractions as the evening went on, with varying amounts of pain coming and going through till about 10pm.

The midwives would come and check on my about twice an hour, with my husband coaching me through breathing exercises. By about midnight, I was in such agony, but had very little supervision from any of the midwives/doctor. I was in the shower, trying to cope with the pain of contractions. It was only until my husband hit the emergency button on the ward, that midwives came to my aid. They immediately me that I was dialated by 10cm, and I should've already been transferred to the birthing unit (because of how far along I was). I was then placed into a wheelchair, wheeled naked, through the maternity ward to the birthing unit.

As i was 10cm, i was told by the midwife to push even though i felt no urge to. I laboured for about 3 hours, before becoming too exhausted to continue. I was in extreme pain. I was coached by my husband and one midwife. The midwife on the birthing unit was lovely and caring, however it was difficult as there was a clear language barrier in place, which, at the state I was in, proved very very difficult.

I became so exhausted that the doctor was called, and when he arrived about an hour later, the idea of an epidural was raised. I accepted the offer of the epidural at about 4am.

As the anaesthetist was preparing to perform the epidural, he was asking the midwives for a particular sized needle to perform it. They frantically searched for the needle, and only located one about 30 min later. My husband had to help the anaesthetist put his gown on as there were no midwives around to help him.

After the epidural, I was able to get some rest.

At about 6.30am, the on call doctor from the night before came back into the hospital. She told me that it was time to push bub out.

I laboured and pushed for about an hour, however, bubs heart rate dropped significantly and an emergency episotomy was performed.

They managed to pull bub out with the assistance if a vacuum. I lost about a litre of blood.

I was quickly stitched back together, and had about 8 midwives and doctors running about. Although I realise they were all present for my benefit, I found the process of having so many unknown persons jabbing me with needles and sewing my vagina back together all at once, very overwhelming and quite traumatic.

Overall, I am thankful for the care the midwives who were there provided to me. Because of them, my baby and me are here safely. I must say, that I felt abandoned by the midwives earlier during my labour. Without my husband advocating for me, I felt powerless and I would've been much less likely to ask for help on my own.

After being transferred back to the ward with a healthy baby, I was given the wrong information regarding my appointments after being discharged from the hospital. The midwives that were doing the house calls to new mothers in my area, were either on leave or unavailable. So the midwives that was handling my case, and she told me to go to a women's clinic, who mistakenly thought they did post natal care. I contacted this clinic, and they said they could not offer this service but only a 6 week check up.

After i had come home with the baby, it was then extremely hard for me to navigate the hospital phone exchange. I was passed back and forth between different persons and offices in the maternity ward, as I didn't know who I was supposed to speak to about the care that bub and I was supposed to be receiving. It was a full 4 days before I could actually alert a midwife to the issues I was having with breastfeeding and jaundis. Essentially, the blunder regarding the follow up I was supposed to receive, meant it was a full 4 days before I received any meaningful contact about post natal care, where in which I had to take him into

hospital for bub and I to receive any follow up care. At the 4 day check up, they then put in a request for a midwife in (which is where I live 40kms west of) to come and see me. I

This midwife then came to see me when he was 18 days old.

Because of the lack of follow up from staff, the first few weeks of motherhood were so traumatic. I struggled with breastfeeding and felt very alone, and when I initially asked for help in those first few days, was passed around and given no help.

As i stated above, I am thankful to the midwives who looked after me and bub, but I unequivocally believe there needs to be more incentives for midwives and doctors to stay in the public midwifery system, so that they are adequately staffed, and can provide a level of care which ensures that situations such as mine, occur less frequently.