

Submission  
No 260

## INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

**Name:** Name suppressed

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Partially  
Confidential

I am writing this as a birth doula, who has witnessed the ongoing systemic problem of birth trauma inflicted by hospital staff, OBGYNs and midwives.

What I have witnessed attending multiple births over the last 6 years is a systemic issue of non consensual medical interventions, and breaching of women's human rights. I have rarely seen women centred care in action. I have seen midwives rushed by time constraints, disrespectful and belittling communication when a woman is her most vulnerable, unsubstantiated and no-evidenced based threats "if you don't do what I say, your baby will die" when trying to coerce a woman into additional monitoring.

At a birth at \_\_\_\_\_ Hospital in 2021, I witnessed the head obstetrician use abusive tactics to coerce a mother into a cesarean. He was using forceful language to insist she needed fetal scalp electrode monitoring. Instead of naming the risks as including infection, abscess, cephalohematoema, injury to baby scalp and to vagina and cervix, he instead said "the risk is.. do you want your baby to die?" This was due to perceived "failure to progress" and not any emergency. He also came into the room in scrubs shortly afterwards already dressed, with the cesarean form in hand, to "offer" her a cesarean.

At a home birth with midwives at the \_\_\_\_\_ Hospital home birth program (under the instruction of \_\_\_\_\_ Hospital). I witnessed two midwives in the room next to the labouring woman continually speaking about having multiple women in labour and not enough midwives available. They were worried about getting from this birth to the next woman in time. They had been attending this birth I was at for approximately 6-8 hours and the mother was 8cm dilated. After getting a call that another woman was unattended and feeling to push, one midwife came into see the current birthing mother I was with and said "it's getting really hard for you isn't it, do you think you need help?" And she said "yes help me" as she was in transition. And the midwife replied "yes so do I, I also think you need more help, so what we are going to do is call the ambulance and have you transferred to \_\_\_\_\_ hospital (90 minutes away). The ambulance will come and you'll be in there alone, your partner will have to drive behind you and your doula can't come." The mother went into distress and felt upset. She went into the bathroom alone and birthed her baby 20 minutes later with the ambulance waiting unnecessarily outside her house. Immediately after giving birth one of the midwives said "ah see, sometimes you just have to scare mum a bit and she'll birth quickly". She was rushed and manipulated. She still tells me this part of the experience affects her today.

I believe doctors and midwives and all hospital staff need immediate, and extensive training on the human rights of mothers and families at birth, in depth training on consent, and trauma informed care, as well as empathy training. The system needs to have a big upgrade if you're going to tell women they will have "women centred care". It's not just a slogan. Currently the system is manipulating women if it's tell them they will have women centred. Are but AT LEAST 1 in 3 are actually leaving with birth trauma from the way they were treated by care providers.