

Submission  
No 262

## INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

**Name:** Name suppressed

**Date Received:** 15 August 2023

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Partially  
Confidential

At 28+3 my private obstetrician who had been supportive of my VBA2C changed his mind. I went to an appointment, my gestational diabetes test results had come back (I had GD) and he decided the risks were now "too high" and he no longer supported a VBA2C. I asked what had changed, he didn't say. I asked specifically what risks had increased, he didn't say. Just kept telling me I needed a c section.

I became very upset (I was crying) and he continued to book me in for a c section at 37 weeks. I asked why so early - he literally said "close enough". C sections are not medically recommended at 37 weeks unless it is an emergency and not evidence based practice given the health impacts on the infants development. I told him I didn't want a c section and certainly didn't want her out, for no medical reason, at 37 weeks because it was "close enough". He booked me in anyways, without my consent.

He did not go through the risks of continuing on with a VBA2C. He did not go through the risks of having a third c section. He gave me no choice in the matter and did not recommend I seek another opinion.

I did however seek a second opinion from

Professor \_\_\_\_\_ who agreed to take me on at \_\_\_\_\_ He was supportive of a VBA2C and agreed there was no medical reason for having the baby at 37 weeks.

I sent an email to my original obstetricians rooms outlining my concerns (very nicely!!) and cancelled all future appointments with my old obstetrician. I will include letter below. I asked them to also cancel the c section and contacted the private hospital to ensure they did.

A couple of days later I received a call from the admin asking me to please come in for a meeting. She said the Dr felt bad for how things had been left and wanted to discuss things with me. I said I really didn't feel comfortable and wouldn't have anyone to care for my (then) 20mth old. She said to bring him with me and assured me the Dr was really wanting to just explain things and not leave it as it was.

So I went in and met with him. He didn't greet me, just told me it was people like me and emails like the one I had written to him that made him want to give up obstetrics. He said I had "slagged" him off, I had criticised a lack of empathy, said booking my c section was a scheduling convenience - all things he wasn't happy with. I was absolutely shocked. I stood up, told him I was leaving as I had had a very different idea of what the meeting was about. He tried to prevent me from leaving by aggressively stating "don't you go" and I honestly thought he was going to grab me. I told him very very firmly "I'm leaving" and walked past him (with my 20mth old in the pram) and left. I broke down outside and was a mess.

Later that evening, and following a call my mother made to his office to state how upset she was that he would treat a pregnant woman like that, he called me and advised he had had an argument with his partner that morning and I had “copped it” after that. He stopped short of apologising.

I sent three additional emails requesting the return of the pregnancy management fee (\$4000) but he refused to pay it back. Despite later agreeing the therapeutic relationship had broken down, he had “intended” on being at the birth therefore was keeping the fee. He said I changed that by cancelling appointments.

After being verbally abused and almost forced into a major medical procedure I did not consent to (not to mention scared as I thought he was going to grab me), there was no way I could set foot back in his office let alone trust him to provide “care”.

My new obstetrician                      midwife contacted his office and he refused to transfer my medical records.

I reported the matter to the HCCC. They have investigated and replied

“When the Commission and the Medical Council of NSW discussed the details of your complaint. Whilst they were not critical of the clinical decisions made surrounding your pregnancy, both parties agreed that it would be appropriate to write to                      in relation to his communication and good patient care. We have asked                      to ensure appropriate and sensitive communication is used when discussing patient’s care and treatment. Effective communication is essential part of the doctor-patient relationship as is being courteous and respectful.”

This is a joke. How can they not be critical of the clinical decisions made?

He booked a medical procedure I did not consent to. He did not follow RANZCOG guidelines nor Australian Health Care charter on informed consent about gestational diabetes and the risks for VBAC or risks for a third section. Drs are legally obliged to give informed consent as well as patient education about the benefits and risks of surgery so a patient can make a decision. This did not occur and the HCCC makes no mention of this breach. He also violated the Australian health care charter with regard to respectful care. He wanted to deliver my baby at 37 weeks, despite there being no medical reason for doing so, even though this is not evidence based practice given the health impacts on the infants development. And he refused to transfer my medical records to my new obstetrician

This was more than a communication issue

He further made a claim to Medicare and bill billed me for the meeting we had where he verbally abused me. I had cancelled my ante natal appointments with him. The meeting was, I believed, so he could apologise. It was not an ante natal appointment as I had cancelled my appointments and was under the care of another obstetrician. Instead he verbally abused me and then bulk billed me for an “ante natal appointment”. We did not discuss my pregnancy, he did not take my blood pressure, nothing. Surely he cannot do that.

Initial email I sent that prompted my obstetrician to tell me That it’s people like me that make him want to give up obstetrics:

From:

Sent: Friday, 9 December 2022 5:38 PM

To: (recipient - name removed)

Subject: Changing providers and not proceeding under (recipients) care

Unfortunately, as Dr X has advised that he is unable to support my choice to try for a VBA2C, I have decided to change providers and will proceed under the management of Dr \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_, who is able to facilitate my choice.

I’m really disappointed that Dr X has changed his stance on the support he is able to provide me. I have been upfront from the beginning of my wants for this birth and how important a vaginal birth was for me.

My last appointment with Dr X was totally unexpected. I was so shocked and overwhelmed by the information given to me and then lack of empathy and explanation that was provided. I was hurriedly booked in for a c section, despite my objections, which I feel could have waited until I was able to process the information I’d received. The appointment was rushed and I don’t feel like I was heard.

I did question the need to have my baby born at 37 weeks. Considering my baby appears happy, healthy and with no medical reason (at least that I’ve been made aware of) for birthing so early - I cant understand why I was still booked in for a c section at 37 weeks. This feels more like a scheduling convenience, as opposed to what's best for my baby.

I said several times I didn’t want another c section. But I was told there were now “too many risks”. The exact risks weren’t explained though and there was no shared decision making. I

was just told what was happening and booked in. There are also many risks involved in having a third c section and this wasn't discussed at all.

I said if I did have to have a c section, could some small changes be made eg dropping the sheet and immediate skin to skin. I was told that due to hospital policy I couldn't have these. I've had 2 c sections and both times I'm the last to hold my baby and have been separated from my babies for long periods of time. I don't want that again. There is also clear evidence that immediate skin to skin has health benefits for mum and baby, which is what I wanted. But I was still told no.

All of my choices for birth have been dismissed without explanation. I feel as if I have been given up on and I am not willing to continue with a provider who hasn't heard me.

As Dr X is unable to facilitate the birth I requested, I won't be continuing with his care. Could you please cancel my future appointments, the c section booked for the 31/1 and I would like to request the return of the pregnancy management fee asap.