

Submission
No 278

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

I'm 32 years of age, live New South Wales and am mother to my 4-year-old daughter.

My birth story began when I was admitted to _____ Hospital in 2018 due to a second occurrence of undiagnosed symptoms of fevers and vomiting at 37 weeks pregnant. I was given numerous IV antibiotics that night and denied an extra blanket when I was shivering uncontrollably. 24hrs later, whilst still having high fevers, I was informed by my obstetrician that I would be induced the next afternoon. I was extremely upset because I felt so weak and like I needed an extra day to prepare my body and my mind for labour. Yet it was made clear to me that refusing their advice would supposedly put my baby at risk.

My induction commenced the next afternoon with my waters being manually broken followed by a balloon. I cried several times through this as I didn't feel adequately prepared for this process and I was shocked that the balloon was immediately uncomfortable. My obstetrician offered me strong painkillers but back in my room a nurse insisted that I wouldn't need the strong painkillers and so I did not take them.

The next morning, I was booked into the birthing suite at 8am to commence the syntocin drip. By lunch time my contractions were longer than the breaks between and at times overlapping. I was struggling to manage the pain and getting upset. I was not allowed to use the bath or shower for pain relief due to the fetal monitoring strapped to my belly. Gas only made me feel nauseas and I feared an epidural would stop my progress, so I requested a pethidine injection to help manage the pain. The injection certainly helped me relax but I didn't notice much change to the pain. I asked if the drip could be slowed down a little and was told no. I then requested that someone check my dilation and after some time a midwife did because the obstetrician was taking too long. Since I was progressing, I asked for an epidural. When the obstetrician arrived, he then checked my dilation again despite the midwife having already done this which felt excessive.

Some time after the epidural, I started feeling contractions and kept asking if I was going into active labour. Without asking my permission, the midwife increased the dose on the epidural so that I would no longer feel these contractions. After the birth I realised what had happened and was appalled that they simply didn't explain what I was feeling to put my mind at ease and to give me the choice of how much feeling I would like to have (as this may have assisted in active labour).

By evening, I was told that I would need to start pushing soon. My obstetrician came and told me that he would only allow me one hour in active labour, so as not to risk my baby, despite my babies heart rate remaining in a healthy range all day. I was going well until I was told that the hour was up and so I needed to have an episiotomy in order to suction pull my baby out. Again, it was made clear that if I refused, it would be my fault if anything happened to my baby. I felt like I had no choice.

I returned to the ward late that evening and my baby was taken to the nursery. As I had gestational diabetes, my baby had to pass 3 blood sugar heel pricks before being allowed to stay in my room. In the night, a nurse woke me to come to the nursery to feed my baby. I struggled to walk as the epidural was still affecting me. I made it to the nursery by holding onto the rails along the walls. I had to change my babies nappy and feed her in the brightly lit nursery. There were very strict rules about everything in there and I was very groggy from the pethidine. The nurse seemed oblivious to this.

I could write more but it would be too extensive and personal. This is my experience only during my first 3 nights in hospital before and after giving birth. I have discussed my experience with 2 separate counsellors but still carry this trauma and would prefer to adopt than fall pregnant again.