

Submission
No 281

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 15 August 2023

Partially
Confidential

Gave birth August last year to my first baby and I am still traumatized by the lack of communication. Brief summary of the course of my birth:

- arrived at hospital, contractions approx 3 mins apart lasting 45 seconds (hospital is a 35 minute drive from my home)
- put in birthing suite, Covid swab taken and then left alone for approx 1 hour.
- midwife returned, insisted on an internal examination. Resulted in significant bleeding, midwife called obstetrician concerned for APH but did not communicate this to me (it was overheard as she called the obstetrician outside)
- change of shift a new midwife arrived and realized I was on the kneeling ground, and in the shower with no pads on the ground (my husband was trying to roll up towels to put under my knees). She quickly rectified this and couldn't believe I hadn't been offered any support items to pop on the ground.
- I explained something had changed after I went to the toilet and I felt my 'pelvis was frozen' and I could no longer move with contractions. I requested some form of analgesia if possible to try get me back to moving.
- the original midwife stated outside the room 'she does not need analgesia, she's only 3cm dilated so needs to deal with it'
- for a first time mum this was completely and utterly heartbreaking and deflating. At this point I lost all confidence in my ability to give birth and lost control of my emotions.
- I will say the other midwife was fantastic, but it's this sort of belittling behavior that causes birth trauma, post natal depression and anxiety.

It turns out my daughter had changed position in my pelvis and was in fact 'stuck'. I was given a timeframe to deliver or they would use instruments to assist. At no point was the reason explained to me or my husband, but the midwives and obstetricians discussed between themselves how my daughters heart rate was dropping and she was in distress. Again, I will reiterate this was not communicated to us, just between themselves in front of us. Although delivered vaginally with no forceps or vacuum, she had sustained quite a significant haematoma to her head resulting in 24hour neuro obs and jaundice. Again, not once did they tell my husband or I what this could mean or what they were concerned about, it wasn't until they called a paediatrician in concerned she may have a subdural bleed that we realized their concern.

FOLLOWING this, we were moved to maternity where we spent 2 nights and despite being a 1st time mother who was very overwhelmed there was little to no support provided - literally. The second night not one midwife or nurse came in to check on us for the entire night. At change of shift that morning the night midwife joked to the day staff about how 'easy' we were because we didn't require any attention. This was not by choice.

I'm now pregnant again, and live in the same area and I am absolutely terrified about what will happen this time around.