

Submission
No 283

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 15 August 2023

Partially
Confidential

I experienced a traumatic birth at the hospital in September 2021. I was 41+5 weeks and had been booked in for an induction (no indications for needing this other than being over my due date) it was during covid so my husband was not allowed to be in the hospital with me at the start of my induction. I had called that morning to check if I should go in because I felt like I had consistent cramps overnight. This was dismissed and I was told to come in at 6am. I spent the day alone on a ward with 4 other women with the cervadil tape in place. In the afternoon there was finally a place for me on the ward and my husband was allowed to join me. By 7pm my contractions were feeling very noticeable but the midwives assured me I would still be a while off.

There were lots of other inductions in on the same day and the wards were packed. I was meant to get tape out at 8pm that night and the balloon inserted. But other crisis's were happening so there were no doctors available to do it. At 3am the midwives checked me again and said I was 2cm so I didn't need the balloon and the tape was finally removed. My husband was then sent home. I asked if I could go to birth suite because by this time I had been experiencing contractions all afternoon. I was told there was no room on birth suite for me. Not long after my waters broke in bed. I crawled from the bed to the showers on the ward in front of a full ward of people. I felt very uncomfortable with this but was in so much pain at this point I had no choice. I called my husband to come back.

He helped me back into bed and after another contraction more fluid came out and it looked a murky colour so the midwife was worried there was meconium in my waters. By this time it was 6am. I finally got wheeled down to birth suite as a bed had just freed up. I felt very self conscious on the ward being in labour but having everyone else trying to rest. As I was being wheeled down to birth suite in a wheel chair I lost more fluid and it was going all through the hospital. When I finally got a spot in birth suite there was not enough staff for me to be handed over to so the midwives from the ward stayed with me.

I was not coping with the pain so I asked for an epidural. As the anethetist was asking for my consent my babies heart rate was lost. An emergency button was pushed and 10 people ran into the room. I was flipped from side to side which felt like forever while they said if they didn't find the babies heart beat I would need to be put under sedation straight away. I signed the consent form amongst the chaos. Thankfully babies heart beat was found after a few minutes. I was rushed to theatre and my baby was born via c section at 7:30 that morning.

The staff who did look after me were amazing but it was VERY evident there was not enough staff or hospital space to provide the care needed in this extremely vulnerable time.

My experience continued to be difficult in the post natal ward. I felt like I could not ask for help overnight. When I did 1 midwife in particular would pop her head in and say you look fine and she would be back but she never came back. She also loudly complained about how this was her first night shift and she was very tired. I rushed my post natal care and stay just so I could get home and get more help from my husband as I was in a ward with 4 people and

he was not allowed to stay. I had trouble feeding so it was just very lucky I had an amazing lactation consultant quickly see me before I left and gave me a nipple shield. Without this I think I would have not ended up breastfeeding my baby.

I understand that I was a public patient and I did not 'pay' for my pregnancy or birth care but I honestly had no choice as private health cover for pregnancy is so incredibly expensive it wasn't an option for us.

At times I felt like an animal in a production lot. I never once felt empowered, safe or nurtured in my birth experience. There was so much uncertainty and at times it was very scary. I ended up with post natal depression and anxiety. I have been on a mental health care plan since my birth. I definitely feel like my birth experience has attributed to this. I still struggle to hear about other peoples experiences. I am scared to have another baby. I know pregnancy and birth is such a small part of having children in the scheme of their lives, but it is also a part that no one ever forgets.