

Submission
No 287

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

I was admitted to Hospital on the 17th February 2003 to be induced due to pre-eclampsia. I was a first time mum, held two degrees and had travelled and lived overseas by myself for an extended period of time so would say I was an intelligent, independent woman with a high level of resilience. I was on a ward with three or four other women, the gel was put in and I was told to go to sleep and my husband could not stay with me. Within hours I started having contractions the nurse was dismissive of my reports, I was alone and afraid. My contractions increased but I was trying really hard to be quiet so I didn't disturb the other women in the room. I spent most of the night naked in the shared bathroom with an extremely hot shower head directed on my belly as this was the only relief I would find and as we were in high level water restrictions at the time on the coast I was worried about using too much water and turned it off when I could (this concern really does show my state of mind at the time). I was rarely checked on and offered Panadol which did nothing. My most vivid memory is going to the nurses station for help and reassurance

I will never forget the nurse at the station was peeling an orange and told me it was my time to show some grit, I will never get over how cruel and uncaring she was. In the early hours of the morning I think about 5am I was offered pethadine and took it. I felt awful at the time and still feel guilt that I took it. By morning the women next to me (an experienced mother) apologised profusely for not helping me throughout the night but she was I. Hospital still pregnant and was worried about interfering. At about 8am my husband arrived at the hospital I was irritated, disappointed with myself and upset. We were taken to the birthing suite and my waters were broken by a doctor. My contractions increased rapidly and my husband called the midwife to see if this was normal, it was not!

I had dilated very quickly (after labouring all night) and my baby was ready to come but I could not push him out, they put a clip on his head, his heart rate was dropping, an intern tried forceps unsuccessfully, the chief doctor was called in and room room filled with what seemed like the whole hospital staff, it was an emergency he told me if I didn't get the baby out now I would be getting a cesarean and then using the forceps he ripped my son from me (all of this without any pain relief). My son was very blue and I insisted several times he was not the right colour until they took him to be checked again. He was small but fine and the nurses at the station on the ward were very shocked to see me wheel my baby back in only a few hours after I had gone down to the birthing suite. What do you know apparently I wasn't exaggerating about my contractions that I had to have all night in a shared room with no support in silence for my first baby, I was in active labour!!! No one would listen and no one cared it was like cruel and unusual archaic behaviour and I would be ashamed to treat a human this way!

I had always wanted children and this was the worst experience of my life. I breastfed out of obligation to the health of my child but found it difficult to bond with him, I kept thinking about how I could take him back and for several months unknowingly referred to him as the baby until my mother gently pointed it out to me. Things slowly improved but the way I was treated in the hospital was disgusting and I still feel twenty years later disgusted with myself for not standing up for myself!!