

Submission
No 355

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 15 August 2023

Partially
Confidential

I have been fortunate enough to have three babies, all with private OBs. Sadly the experience I had with my first was horrific and forever life altering. My care provider broke my trust on so many levels and left me feeling broken, unheard and honestly as if I was only a birthing vessel. It was not the start to motherhood I expected nor would I ever wish upon anyone.

The pregnancy was a textbook pregnancy, I had questions constantly as it was my first baby but I trusted my provider blindly and didn't have any reason not to. But when I got to 38 weeks she started to pressure me about giving birth as soon as possible. She said the longer I go on the more risk there is to the baby and she recommended an induction at 39 weeks and 40 weeks which I declined each appointment as I wanted to give my body a chance. I felt as if she didn't trust that my body could labour and was very stressed and discouraged by the pressure she was putting on me to have intervention with no medical reason.

When I went for my 41 week appointment it was different. She was really firm and quite cruel when I declined to get an induction yet again and requested for more time. Her immediate response to me this time was "I've delivered plenty of dead babies. I don't want yours to be the same. You need to get induced." Naturally I panicked, I didn't want my baby to die no one wants this. She made me feel selfish and uninformed. There is no doubt in my mind even at the time that she was bullying me but with a threat like that, how can you not feel stressed? My husband and I sat there in silence, defeated. She then perked up and said "let's talk about dates in a moment. I should take your blood pressure because I forgot to earlier," and naturally my blood pressure was sky high - surprise surprise. Why wouldn't it be when she just played the dead baby card on me. So I was told I had to be admitted to hospital that night to be induced for preeclampsia. I cried the whole way home to collect my things. Both my husband and I knew she manipulated the situation to get what she wanted.

I was admitted for the night and scheduled to be induced in the morning via drip and unsurprisingly my blood pressure returned to normal before I even went to sleep that night. But I was told I still had to be induced because I was still preeclamptic and my baby was still at risk. It was incredibly frustrating for them to have the facts right there and yet tell me this, essentially holding me hostage.

I tried to be positive about the fact that I would see my baby the next day, telling myself that at least I could still have my vaginal birth and it wasn't a cesarean that I was being forced into. But despite this I was beside myself and the whole labour was awful, no midwives looked after me or helped me labour. I was just abandoned in a room and intermittently asked if I wanted pain relief. I had no idea this wasn't normal and felt stressed and tossed aside. I got an epidural at 7cm as I was told by the midwives that I would "miss out as everyone was going home" if I waited much longer. It went patchy fast so I just endured the pains.

I got told I was 9cm but quickly found out bub was posterior and I had a cervical lip, I asked if there was anything I could do to turn him or if I could birth him like this as I was told no I couldn't and that they would contact my OB. When she arrived I was quickly told that my

baby was in distress and we need to get him out asap via an emergency cesarean. At this point I had been labouring for 9.5hrs and was so shattered by this news. I was wheeled down to the operating theater area and left crying worrying about his safety in an open corridor for over an hour as they organized my supposedly urgent caesarean, before getting into surgery.

When I was laying they tried to correct my epidural to no avail. I recall them dosing me up an additional two times and tipping my whole body on its side to try and help things a long but I could still feel the co contractions all over my belly at this point despite being unable to move my feet and legs. They then proceeded to give me a spinal block but despite me saying I could feel the ice during the ice test they cut me open and I felt the whole procedure. I remember screaming felt like I was being butchered I honestly remember thinking "I can't believe I will die like this. I never got to meet my son." I thrashed around and tried to move my arms but quickly realized that they were strapped down, I'm unsure when that happened. I recall looking into the anesthesiologist's eyes and crying for him to help me and he held my hand and just whispered "I am so so sorry."

My poor husband was forced to sit in a far corner of the room while he panicked and heard me scream in pain. He was told he couldn't hold my hand and no one explained what was going on because they didn't want to acknowledge the truth and make themselves liable. Instead he was neglected in a corner thinking that I was going to die along with our child.

When my son was born I just saw him raised. I didn't get to hold him, he wasn't brought to me for me to see up close despite him being in perfect health and my request in my birth plan to have skin to skin with him. Instead he was whisked away with my husband after they did his vitals and they were forced to leave the room. I projectile vomited all over myself soon after they left and they put me under GA to finish up the surgery as I was hysterical from the pain I was in. I was told an hour passed before I woke up in recovery and was reunited with my son and husband.

The next day my OB came to check on me and when I spoke to her about the experience she vehemently denied that I felt the whole process. Instead I was told that I just didn't understand the "tugging sensation" I was feeling, even though I told her there was no tugging sensation at all only cutting and severe pain which was why I was screaming and thrashing. I didn't ask to have a post birth debrief because it was clear nothing good would come of it for me.

With my 2nd I wanted to try for a VBAC so badly but despite having therapy for 1.5yrs my diagnosed PTSD and PND that stemmed from my birth was too debilitating. The thought of another emergency cesarean was beyond horrific, so I elected for a planned cesarean with my new OB. It was insanely healing and also helped confirm what I always knew - that I was right, I wasn't crazy, I felt my previous cesarean. All I felt during this cesarean was tugging and there was zero pain if anything I was comfortable and insanely calm. This birth made me so

much more angry about my prior experience and determined to experience a VBA2C for my next birth .

Before I had my VBA2C this year my I requested my records from my first birth and naturally they omitted my experience and tweaked the whole story to suit themselves. Why would they want to put any of that in writing.

Even though I'm not as triggered by my experience now, 4yrs later as I once was, I had to work hard to get to this point mentally. But I shouldn't have had to. My first experience shouldn't have happened and I realize now that several points along the way could've made my experience significantly less traumatic if someone intervened or quite frankly cared to treat me like a human being rather than a birthing vessel.

No woman should experience this. No birthing partner should have to endure this. Things need to change. The fact this happens is not good enough. We deserve better.