

Submission
No 356

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

I have worked as a professional birth photographer for the past 10 years, photographing around 150 births in that time. I have also given birth 5 times myself.

The birth I am referring to in this submission, took place in [REDACTED] Private Hospital in 2016. I was attending in a photographer role and it was the couple's first birth. The mother was induced due to her waters breaking and labour being slow to begin. She laboured beautifully, opting for an epidural when things became too intense for her. Everything was going to plan. Her liquor was clear and baby was completely happy on the monitor.

The obstetrician arrived at 5:30pm to check her progress before he planned to head home for the day. It was a Friday afternoon and the obstetrician lived a distance away. He performed a vaginal examination and found her to be 9.5cm. He declared that she should be fully dilated within 30 minutes, when he would return to perform a vacuum delivery. I was completely confused why he would state that he would be performing a vacuum delivery in 30 minutes time, partly because there was no medical indication for such, and secondly because to the best of my knowledge, a vacuum delivery should only be performed in an urgent situation, not in 30 minutes time. I soon realised this vacuum delivery was for no reason other than to allow the doctor to have the birth over and done with so he could begin his weekend.

True to his word, the obstetrician walked back in the room 30 minutes later with a midwife on hand. The mother had not pushed even one time before he reached deep into her vagina to fit the vacuum to the top of the baby's head, which was still sitting high in the pelvis. The obstetrician then put one foot up on the bed, like he was pulling a calf, and literally reeled the baby from her body. There was a gush of meconium as the baby was extracted and the doctor said "See that meconium, that means your baby was distressed so it's lucky I got him out now". This was a blatant lie as the waters had been clear until the moment he used excessive force on the baby unnecessarily.

The baby had very deep purple bruising on the top of his head from the delivery and he appeared very drowsy and not at all interested in latching to the breast over the next few hours. The midwife seemed completely unperturbed.

Around 24 hours later a midwife noticed that the baby was having seizures and he was transferred directly to NICU in another hospital. The mother suffered massive stress and anxiety about being separated from her baby and also not knowing if he would be ok. Their breastfeeding journey came to an abrupt end. He remained in NICU for a week due to a bleed on the brain. The parents were informed this was most likely due to the vacuum delivery.

Due to the fact that the obstetrician convinced the parents the medicalised delivery had been warranted, they never lodged a complaint or realised the huge medical negligence and obstetric violence that occurred in their birth. The mother suffered anxiety for months and their baby had to continue to be monitored for the first 12 months of life.