

Submission
No 358

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

I would consider my birth a success and I am proud of the way I did it! I did it! With no credit to the hospital where I birthed at, my birth was what it needed to be and how I decided.

My only experience with birth prior to my own was when I attended my sisters home birth 9 months prior to my own labour. I am so blessed to have been able to see that birth is not scary and is so naturally designed to "go right" despite what hospitals and media (drama shows etc.) often tell us. I was so inspired and excited to birth until all the apps and appointments started telling me what can go wrong and what medical intervention I should be doing to "help" me. I turned to my sister who is also a midwife as well as engaged with a private midwife and was encouraged to educate myself.

They sent me credible journals and information with varying perspectives so I could make up my own mind. The first decision I made was to homebirth because as far as I could tell the further a birth was planned from hospital the better it went!

Pregnancy continued well for me and I was so excited for it as it neared the end. At 36 1/2 weeks I felt some discomfort I hadn't before. On advice from my sister and private midwife I went to hospital for a check up. On telling the hospital my symptoms I was told that it was likely end of pregnancy signs and I could go home. No testing, nothing. My private midwife asked me a simple question that following day. She said, "were you happy with how your concerns were responded too and are you now comfortable that you are ok?" I told her that "I felt that I had been given a false sense of security. That my body was telling me something else but I guess I had to trust the professionals." Again I was encouraged to know myself and trust my gut. I went to a different hospital, this time not to tell them of my concerns but to ask that they respond to them and they did. Blood tests revealed that I had preeclampsia. I was no longer eligible for a homebirth and had to rely on the hospital that had turned me away days before. Suddenly I was more nervous for birth. Not because of what it now included, but because of where it was.

My private midwife and my sister continued to journey this change in my plan with me, my sister attending hospital visits with me where the hospital even tried to separate her from me as if to make sure she couldn't support me or inform me of all my options and to make sure I would follow their course of direction. They suddenly wanted to admit me and induce labour the next day now at just 37 weeks and a couple of days. I told the hospital that given how my pregnancy had tracked, my blood tests and how I was feeling I was going to go home and would come in for regular check ups over the coming days and if I hadn't gone into labour naturally by 38 weeks I would chose induction. The staff member at the time accused me of being in labour and trying to get home for a secret home birth. This was the most uncomfortable experience of my entire pregnancy. To this day I actually believe that I was experiencing tightenings and it was my body completely aware that something wasn't right and was working to bring on labour itself. Of course I didn't know this is what labour felt like at the time. This encounter with the midwife and the doctor made my heart race, my ears thump, a lump form in my throat and the tightenings stop. It may sound dramatic but my body knew that sitting in that fear was not the place to labour. I did as I now planned and returned to hospital at 38 weeks to deliver my baby. Credit to the obstician and midwife on staff that evening before and the day of my birth I was given options to help induce spontaneous labour and when these didn't work I chose induction. I laboured for a few hours and when things were not progressing as expected and showed signs for concern I made the decision to have an emergency cesarian. It didn't happen to me, no one forced my hand, I made the decision that was best and safest for myself and my baby. I was able to do this and

be proud of it because I had again educated myself and surrounded myself with people who had journeyed birth with me and I knew what my body was telling me and what needed to come next. I can tell you the exact moment that I felt my body tell me something wasn't right during labour. It was the first time I was grateful to be at the hospital.

I was taken to theatre where I was met with an excellent staff and the midwife who had been with me during labour that morning held my hand when my husband couldn't be there. I was completely under anesthetic when my baby entered the world, I wasn't the first person to see her, hold her or have skin to skin with her but I grew her, made the decisions for her safety and I birthed her. It was always my birth story. I can thank, or perhaps I can never thank enough, my sister, my private midwife and the midwife who held my hand, they are credit to the profession of midwifery and if hospitals provided the same continuity of care that they do, I know birth and post birth wellbeing would look very different for many women in this country. Their practice, while exceptional I should hope one day, every woman receives as standard so they can feel success and proud of themselves because they should!