

Submission
No 362

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

My name is _____, I live in Sydney, I have a 4 year old and a 10 year old.

I had a home-birth almost 4 years ago. We hired a private midwife, and we ended up with a hospital transfer.

I had issues with my private midwife. When I hired her I gave her a lot of questions and she answered me and I feel that she lied to me. One of my concerns was that I didn't want any scans but she wanted me to at least have one. I agreed to have one so she could be my midwife.

I also told her I knew I would be overdue as I did with my first daughter and this was a big issue and stress in my previous birth, as medical system likes to intervene and induce woman that go overdue.

I asked her about that and she said there would be no problems, that she had supported woman that had gone to 43 weeks.

And my last concern was wanting to know what would happen in case I had a haemorrhage as I had experience this on my first birth and with a miscarriage and she seemed supportive and she reassured me that she was fine with this should it happen again. she just kept saying to me that I would be fine this time, and never really gave me a proper answer on what would happen if I did in fact haemorrhage

My pregnancy was fine, but when it came to the birth, I was "overdue" at 42 + 1. At 41 weeks she pressured me to get another scan and that if I didn't get another scan she told me that she would drop me. She Threatened me to be without care at 42 weeks which stressed me. Luckily I went into labour the day before she wanted me to go in for another scan. She never mentioned that she was going to ask me to do another scan.

The birth was fine, I was in labour for 3 hours. She came one hour before my daughter was born. She was very respectful. She did ask me if she could feel my baby, which I had said no previously and then when she came in and asked me again, i said yes, just because I was in active labour and not really caring too much then. I let her do that. Her and the other midwife stood aside and let me do my thing. Which was nice. Then my daughter was born and she wasn't breathing straight away. I had watched a lot of videos to prepare myself in a case like this, I was very calm and I was going to allow my daughter to take her time to take her first breath. But she didn't breathe for about 30 seconds. And everything changed. Lights went on and panic mode quick in the room. my midwife grabbed my baby out of my arms and started to do CPR . I had my sister and partner and midwives and they went into full panic. That went on for about 10 minutes. I was the only one who was calm, trusting my baby would breathe, we were both still in this bubble of love bliss and trust. Not once I felt she wouldn't survive, we were connected and I knew she was fine. While that was happening, I looked down and noticed that the placenta was inside of me and I notice that I was bleeding so I thought oh my god great, here we go, another thing everyone is going to panic about.

My daughter started breathing and they put her on my chest and they noticed that I had started bleeding. They wanted me to give me Oxytocin but I didn't want it. So my midwife started pushing and pushing and getting angry about it. I felt pressured. I got the Oxytocin. The paramedics came and they said I had to go to hospital for my own sake because I had lost too much blood. But after the shot and my adrenalin subsided I felt really comfortable and I wanted to stay home because if I was going to hospital it would be too much and I was afraid they will create more issues, and would push and pressure me with more interventions for my daughter and I. The only person who I felt fully supported by in that moment was the woman paramedic, she was a sweetheart she was the highlight of my birth. She was such a loving woman that didn't put any pressure on me to go to the hospital. She said we are here to help, it is your decision she was really lovely, respectful and supportive. Is crazy how much positive impact can have a person that I saw for 2 hrs of my whole experience, because she gave me what a woman in birth needs. But my midwife was angry at me , I wasn't ready to go to hospital and I kept delaying and delaying. I was asking her questions like how long will she usually stay with a mom after birth and she said - "Well I'm not going to stay here all night", talking to me like that, really rough, angry and frustrated.

I ended up agreeing to go into hospital, because my midwife just said it would be for me, for my blood loss, that I probably needed an infusion and that if i got one i would feel much better, and I would have more energy to take care of my newborn.. that was a heartbreaking decision for me because I really didn't want to go to hospital.

Once I get there they check me and my baby. They said her oxygen levels were too low. And that they had to take her to NICU and that I couldn't come. I obviously panicked and said no you aren't going to take my baby. So I refused for them to take her and they came back again saying your daughter's oxygen level is too low and that they needed to take her, one of the reason they told me this happen was probably because I had left the placenta attached for too long. (4 hrs attached)

on the second time they said that maybe her dad could come but I didn't want to leave my baby, I was the only thing she new, how are you expected to not be there for your baby?? to leave her alone in a traumatic environment without you, the mother not around. So once again I said **YOU ARE NOT TAKING MY BABY AWAY FROM ME, YOU TAKE ME WITH HER.** This was the third time and they finally said "Okay fine, maybe we can take you in a wheelchair"

They took us, the doctor we got was quite respectful and she explained everything they wanted to do to my baby, so that bit was fine. My daughter had X-Rays and a bunch of interventions. We had originally wanted to do 2 weeks at home with no visitors so we could have a slow peaceful and attached start. I don't know how many people touched my baby. She would scream every time they would touch her and poking her leg when they wanted to get blood out of her every 30 minutes.

Everything that I didn't want happened, so that was really heartbreaking.

All of a sudden when everything calmed down and she was stable they allowed us to stay in the NICU. Even though they said parents aren't allowed to stay, they can only visit. They gave us a quarantine room that they had available but the next day I had to go for a blood transfusion and then later that day we had social services come to us, that they had to check to see if I was a responsible parent and was going to harm or neglect my child because I had refused taking her to the NICU straight away, because it wasn't offered to me to go with my daughter. Once the social worker came and told me all of this, I felt like I had lost every power I had as a mum. I felt like it was a way of threatening me, that if I don't comply or follow through and I had to stop questioning everything that was happening to my baby because otherwise social services would get involved.

That was really hard . feeling like I had no power, control or say to what happened to my baby, what was needed for my baby. I just didn't want her to be taken away from me, I wanted to be with her because I know it's so important. We ended up staying 6 days in the hospital, I had my own room. I spent 90% of the time in the quarantine room with my daughter and husband. There was only one recliner in that room so my husband ended up sleeping on the floor while I took the reclining chair. It wasn't until the night before we left that a nurse asked my husband " Why are you sleeping on the floor? We have another reclining chair to use". Nobody mentioned that he could have something to sleep on. That was very frustrating as well.

My midwife kept asking to come to the hospital. I didn't want her to come because I felt attacked by her. I had my sister, I didn't feel the need to have the midwife around.

My husband was talking to her for 1.5 hours every day, she was suggesting things.

one of the midwives from the hospital kept telling me that I need to get a shot to prevent of getting blood clots and I kept saying no, I needed more information. They said to me - everyone has this shot. but I want to know the side effects, I don't like to put thing in my body, that I have no idea what they are, what it has and what side effects it could potentially have. Finally she gave me information and I declined. Then my husband was the one who asked if I could use those long stockings to prevent that from happening and someone brought them to me. Why is this not offer as an alternative?

It was 3 days later that I started getting back pain, it was really bad and I was crying from that pain so I mentioned it to the doctor that was seeing me. He was very condescending and said : "Oh that is just after birth pain". And I said no they are not, I have had another child, and I have been having the after birth pain, but this is very different, this is hurting so much, I mentioned it 3 times to him. He said to take a pain killer, So he couldn't care less. He was obviously annoyed at me because I was the patient asking about side effects and questioning. It wasn't until I called my mum and she said to me that sounds like sciatic pain, try using this and doing this movement, when I did what she said, it worked and the pain went away.

I was completely dismissed, no one would listen to what I was saying.

Another time my mom helped me from the other side of the world through factime , was when we just arrived at the hospital, and they told me "u need to start breastfeeding your

daughter" and they left, and even though I had breastfed my first daughter, with this situation it was different, we were both under so much stress.. I tried breastfeeding my baby and she didn't seem interested on the boob at all, she was sleeping, I started getting nervous, because if I didn't breastfeed her right away they would have to give her something else to hydrate. So I call my mom and she gave me the idea of putting some colostrum on my finger and rubbing it on my babies lips, and that's when my baby was responsive towards my breast and started breastfeeding.

the midwives just left me to deal with it with no support, just pressure. thank god i have a mom that breastfed 5 children and could give me more advice than the midwives and nurses that were there.

It's such a difference between midwives who follow policies and tell me to follow the rules and that is it and ones who were respectful and compassionate and told us that we are doing the right thing.

For example, one midwife said I was not allowed to stay in the quarantine room with my daughter. That only the dad had been allowed to stay with her.

on the 6th day We were finally release from hospital and went home.

My private midwife was really angry at me that I didn't want her support at the hospital.

She did end up coming to my postpartum checks as I said I wanted her to check my baby. It was very weird. The first thing she said to me after my experience at the hospital when she arrive at my house was "I just came from a birth, the birth that you wanted". I felt horrible and like she was deliberately trying to hurt me - other women can have these births - not you.

We got into a huge discussion where she mention that the last week had been a really hard week for her. I just didn't understand that she was expressing these feelings to me after what I went through and after 6 days at the hospital I didn't really care how hard that had been for my midwife. because I didn't want to follow her orders. She then started messaging my husband and stopped referring to me with my name, how she had always refer to me when ever she talked or message my husband and started messaging him and referring about me as "she". For example, "She's not going to listen to us so she...". It felt like she was trying to grab my husband and team up against me and unfortunately my husband fell for that. I still feel resentment there, I felt betrayed by him.

For example when I was losing blood and they were pressuring me to take the Oxytocin, I had an internal conversation with myself to snap myself out of being dizzy and affirmed I had to be strong, so I woke myself up properly, didnt feel dizzy anymore, but I felt weak so I made the decision of ok, I might need this drug. I then agreed to take the Oxytocin. My midwife told me the only reason I didn't pass out was because of the shot and that it was given to me when

I was passing out. I know that is not the reason. The way she spoke to me was authoritarian and like she knew what was best, that violent attitude she had with me triggered something in me that I didn't want to listen or follow this authority figure at my birth. I feel that if she had expressed her concerns in a loving, supportive, way (like the paramedic) instead of "You have to do what I tell you because I have been a midwife for 30 years" Maybe if my daughter wouldn't have been ripped out of my arms straight away, things might've been different, something I will never know.

So after my experience with my midwife, my mum suggested that maybe racism played a part. during the pregnancy she would make comments about my eldest brown daughter like "she is so beautiful , she looks like those beautiful Mexican little girls". She would say things like you are such a lucky girl, your husband is so amazing, my husband is a white English man and I felt like she really loved my husband.

at another moment she said to me "well you didn't hire me" which I reply of course I did, my husband payed with his work but I made the wrong decision of hiring here.

Why would you take on a pregnant woman that you think is not hiring you. Just to support the husband? I don't know.

Unfortunately this whole situation and experience has brought many issues to my life, and with my partner.

I have suffered from PostPartum depression since then, with the first 2 years having a lot of suicidal thoughts, making me feel like I'm a horrible mother and that I bring my children into this world to suffer pain.

I think our system is not woman centre. everything is based in policies that have to be fallen and it doesn't matter the consequences they have.

we need a care system thats more respectful of people who ask questions and that offer more evidence, I think we need birth professionals - clinicians, midwives, nurses and private midwife that communicates using a woman-centred approach.

- I think mother and babies should NEVER be separated.
- we need more public funding for Access to birth options, like home births, birth centres, and Birthing on Country.
- Access to unbiased evidence-based information
- MANDATORY trauma-informed training for clinicians and midwives
- More funding for postpartum care, like health physiotherapy, social workers, lactation support.