

Submission
No 393

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

I am a midwife with 13 years experience. I have primarily worked in the hospital system but have recently transitioned into private practice.

I always wanted to be a midwife from the day I birthed my first child. I was very fortunate enough to experience a normal birth and my second birth was also a normal birth. I educated myself and surrounded myself with positive people. I was also very fortunate to have a partner that also supported my views and the way I wanted to birth. These birth experiences commenced my journey to becoming a midwife. Sadly I am a minority when it comes to physiological birth.

During my time as a student, and training at a level 4 hospital, there was not one day that I did not come home crying. I was astounded at the way women were being treated and also bullied into unnecessary inductions and csections.

*21 year old being told that her pelvis was not able to birth a baby normally and therefore had to have a csection.

* 24 year old, multip being told by the doctor that she should have birthed a few hours ago as she is second time mum, so therefore needs to have csection. After this csection they punctured her bladder and she had to have a colostomy bag for 2 weeks.

*A doctor wanting to clear the board, before his shift was over and so told the midwives to prepare all the women for csections.

* A manager saying to me to force the woman into having an epidural so she doesn't have to hear her scream.

I have numerous other stories but these are the ones that stick out when I was a student.

When I got my registration, I thought I can try and change a woman's story but working in the "system" you have no say. Doctors have the upper hand and there is no evidence based medicine being practised.

On one of my shifts we had 2 midwives and 3 students looking after 8 women. This is not a rare occurrence, this is a very common day in the birthing unit. When you have no staff, and you are being stretched to the limit. Women are going to be coerced into practises that are not in any shape or form evidence based. Students were being asked to look after the women and therefore poor care was being provided which was leading to poor outcomes for the women.

One day as a junior midwife, I had been given handover for a women that was refusing vaginal examinations. In my eyes, if a woman refuses and not consenting then you respect her wishes and find other ways to continue care. I was told to get into the room and do the vaginal examination. On entering the room, the woman and her partner were beside themselves. I asked them what had happened and they proceeded to tell me of how they were being coerced. I told them, that I was not going to push them and if they didn't want the vaginal examination I wasn't going to do it. I then came out of the room and told my team leader the scenario. She then stormed into the room and told the woman that if she didn't comply then she would be taken into theatre for a csection!! SO THIS IS NORMAL???

Where is choice? Where is our human right? Where is basic human decency? Where is DO NO HARM?

On another occasion, I was working in the postnatal ward and a woman came in the evening to be admitted for an induction the next morning. When I looked at her card, I was trying to find out the reason for her induction. I asked her, but she did not know why. She said, I was told that if I didn't get induced my baby would die!! I looked through her notes to find that the reason was due to advanced maternal age. This was a multip woman who had birthed her 2 other children normally at 41 weeks. Now she was 38 years old and 37 weeks pregnant. I took her into the room and began an education session with her. After that session, she understood what I was trying to tell her. I begged her not tell anyone that I had provided her the education that there was no reason for her to be induced. The next day, the Dr came in and started to tell her how irresponsible she was. He proceeded to give her outdated statistics and information. He told her that she would have a dead baby if she didn't get induced.

The "dead baby card" is thrown around so often that it is disgusting. Of course when it is your first baby, and you have not educated yourself and read the evidence, you are going to do what the Dr said because he or she has more authority and supposedly knows what they are doing.

The bullying and coercion is horrific! Women are not given any choice. Women are being abused and there is no surprise that our current statistics is 1 in 3 women are suffering birth trauma.

I have now gone into private practice so that I can provide gold class care and evidence based medicine. The majority of the women I look after have been women who have a) suffered birth trauma and now want a positive birth experience or b) have had a friend or family member who has experienced birth trauma and does not want that experience for themselves.

I am hopeful that we will get something positive out of this enquiry. I am hopeful that each woman is provided with choices and options into the way they wish to birth.

Every woman has right to choose!! Every woman has a right to a positive birth experience.

STOP THE VIOLENCE!!!