

Submission
No 396

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 14 August 2023

Partially
Confidential

To point out a few take aways from my experience, here is where I felt the doctors, midwives and nurses on my case at the [REDACTED] hospital abused their power.

- I was absolutely coerced into an induction that I did not want, and I do not believe was necessary. The doctor used language like "do you think you can live with yourself?" And laughed and scoffed whilst saying "what, you think your going home now?". I am still furious as I did not want an induction, but was honestly made to feel like I didn't have a choice. I was also denied MINOR pain meds on 3 separate occasions.

- I was originally classed as high risk, which meant I saw a different OB every check up for several months, with no option for continuity of care.

- I don't believe the laws protect women at all. Women are at their most vulnerable. You have no choice but to trust doctors, I felt like they just wanted to tick their boxes without care for the emotional damage caused. I was made to feel like I didn't have choices. The laws don't protect women from words of doctors, from feeling pressured from doctors. In my opinion, women aren't always aware of their rights.

- I personally believe women should be given the right to birth however they choose, be it no intervention or lots of intervention. I think if doctors had no time limits on women (I felt like a stopwatch started the second I entered the hospital). Ideally, if women had access to an advocate to speak their wishes and their wishes were respected there would be a lot less birth trauma. In general there needs to be more focus on women's mental health in labour and birth. In my entire experience at the [REDACTED] no one ONCE asked me what I wanted, or if I felt ok mentally. To me, that is shocking. Rather than telling women what doctors will do, give them the options and let them choose.

I have gone back and fourth about how to handle the manner in which I was treated during the birth of my daughter 6 months ago. I'm still so angry about how I was mistreated by doctors and staff at the [REDACTED] hospital. Let me start by saying the midwife I had later in my prenatal care was excellent, and had she been present at my birth to advocate for me I truly believe I would have avoided the abuse I endured at the hands of hospital staff.

I wanted a natural birth with as low intervention as possible, however I had discussed with my midwife and was prepared to consent to some interventions if it was necessary. One of my big fears was an induction. I'm a little nervous about hospitals and I wanted to avoid this if possible. When my due date hit, I discussed my plans with my midwife - that I wanted to go until 41 weeks 5 days before consenting to an induction (from my research the risks increased at 42 weeks, so this kept me well clear of that, whilst still giving my baby time to arrive on her own).

I had my 41 week check up at the [REDACTED], as I had lost my mucus plug that morning I was confident my baby would arrive on her own before my 5 days were up, and I really wanted to give her that chance. My midwife was unable to accompany me to the 41 week appointment at the [REDACTED] so I went with my husband.

The hospital midwife strapped on a monitor, I explained that I had lost my mucus plug so I didn't plan on staying here etc. My babies heart rate dipped for a minute or so on the monitor.

The hospital midwife without speaking to me pressed a button and several people ran in, a nurse, an OB. During this time the hospital midwife began to place an IV (without asking me, simply told me she was doing it without saying why). My babies heartrate went right back to normal, but the OB simply continued to say "right then let's get this baby out, I've recommended an induction". I said "wait a minute, I'm not sure about this, she's fine now can I go home?". The doctor literally scoffed at me and said "what, you think you're going home now??" She laughed. I was visibly upset and she laughed. I said I wanted to speak to my midwife first and the OB continued to say "no, there is no time. Come on, you're 41 weeks time to see the baby". I tried to argue and said "her heartrate is fine now, perhaps she grabbed the cord?" The doctor then continued to tell me "no, come on, you have been bleeding, you need to think about your baby". I said no, I wasn't bleeding it was my mucus plug. It came in one go when I went to the bathroom and I hadn't had a drop since, that's not bleeding. The "doctor rolled her eyes at me and said (I will never forget this). "Do you really think you can live with yourself if you go home after I have told you this information?". I felt I wasn't allowed to leave. In hindsight, I understand I could have walked out, but she really convinced me if I left I was an incompetent parent. In the end, I agreed to let them do a stretch and sweep, and if needed after that, the gel. Again, I had lost my mucus plug and I was very convinced that my baby wouldn't need much help getting going.

The doctor said ok and they put me in a room.

What makes me angry is after they started they had to get started right away and I didn't have 5 minutes to get my midwife on the phone, they then left me for over 7 hours, in a room. I'm pretty sure they just forgot I was there, as it genuinely felt like the next time I saw a medical staff member they were just trying to rush me.

When they came in they had a hospital midwife who announced they would be putting in a balloon, the doc would be in in a second. I said "no, that's not what I agreed to and she said my cervix wasn't ready for a stretch and sweep and the gel would annoy baby so we are skipping them. From my research I don't think this is true. My cervix was still at full height and I wasn't dilated. I'm not a doctor, but I really wonder if that's why i never dilated.

I asked about pain meds and the midwife said she could give me gas. I said I would like that. She went out and returned with a doctor, the doctor said "ok let's put this balloon in". I asked the midwife about the gas she promised she simply said "oh well the doctor is here now so it's too late, gas was not an option now". The doctor put in the balloon WITHOUT ANY PAIN RELIEF. Not even a Panadol. It was absolute torture. When they had done it, the doctor said it needed 7 hours at least to work.

They came back in after around 3 hours and said "well it didn't work, we will break your waters and do the pitocin drip". I asked why they hadn't given more time and I was ignored. I really didn't want to get to the pitocin drip. The doctor said she needed to break my waters now. I began crying quite hysterically about needing the drip (this was what I really wanted to avoid). The doctor just continued to tell me that I needed to stay still so she could break my waters. Despite me being so upset, she didn't even stop. There was no empathy at all for me being upset. At this point my husband screamed at her saying "no, stop this. You just need to get

out and give us a moment - can't you see my wife is upset?". I still can't believe the doctor didn't offer to let me take a breath. It was so calouce, just getting annoyed that I wasn't still.

She came back later and broke my waters. I told her and another nurse that I'd had ZERO liquid / discharge, I was completely ignored. I was later told the doctor somehow "missed" breaking my waters.

They started me on the pitocin drip, it was upped and upped to the max very quickly. They told me to get some rest. During the night, I asked twice for a Panadol so I could get some sleep. Both occasions the nurse said she couldn't give me any because she didn't believe it would help as much as I wanted. This was rather confusing to me as my midwife had specifically advised me to take Panadol whilst labouring at home. By the time the morning rolled around I was exhausted. I hadn't slept for even one minute. I asked again about a bath and was told "sorry, we need to keep monitoring so you won't be able to be in the bath at all". This is where I lost it, I'm still angry at this as I don't believe this should have been the doctors choice. I believe I should have been able to weigh up the risks myself and make that decision.

When eventually things weren't progressing, and bubs heart rate dropped another time they got a surgeon in to talk to me about a c-section. I'm probably a rarity here, but I'm so thankful for the c-section. By this point they had managed to get a different group practice midwife in. She offered to me that she could talk to them about giving me longer before jumping to a c-section. I consented to the c-section. Not because it was what I wanted but because the doctor was the first one who asked me if I was ok and actually spoke to me. I was frankly terrified about what might happen if I birthed with the previous team who were responsible for my care.