

Submission
No 397

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

My First and third births were very traumatic and resulted in years of nightmares, flashbacks and unresolved trauma. During the labour in hospital I felt unprotected, unheard, like an object; both during and in the aftercare in the maternity ward.

I went with a private hospital and private obstetrician because I thought I would avoid suffering I had heard about in the public system. Unfortunately, I don't think anything was avoided and all I got was into huge debt.

The unwanted checking and touching both during and after baby was born was like an assault on my body . Having my waters broken was literally the most horrific pain ever and had I been explained what this would feel like or involve I would not have done that pain free.

Post birth I had "epidural headaches " which sounded not so serious but basically meant I passed out if I lifted my head off the bed more than 20 degrees so couldn't even hold the baby. So my anesthetist came back in the next day and said he would re-do the epidural and in most cases this cures the ' headaches '. His energy towards me was so rude like I was causing a nuisance. I felt so scared at one point I was convulsing shivering with such fear he simply said " stop moving - I might Pierce the wrong spot you need to stop moving now ". I was involuntarily shaking with fear that he was accidentally going to paralyze me. He then started saying how he never sees epidural headaches and it must be a problem with my body why it happened and it wasn't anything to do with him and I should be careful having more children getting an epidural next time etc etc. he made it loud and clear that it was my fault this happened . He had all the power , all the medical knowledge I just had to lie there and listen to him. That man's treatment of me has terrorized my thoughts ever since. He had a stressful situation 1000% worse by his treatment of me.

The second big trauma was with my third baby I had a third degree tear and the obstetrician couldn't be bothered wheeling me into the surgery room to do the proper stitching under the proper lights. The midwife had told me that if it's one or two degree they will do it in the room, if it's three we will go into surgery room - and when we didn't I was so scared because this was my body. My after care. I didn't have the confidence to speak up and challenge his authority . I heard her whisper to him " shouldn't we go into surgery for this " and he just looked at her and kept working , shrugging her off.

Then when I go into the ward nobody explained what a third degree tear even was or what it meant. I googled it and thought my own research found out that many women can end up permanently incontinent from this injury which the physio confirmed this the next day .

Post birth - Being milked like a cow by the midwives was humiliating, painful and I didn't have the confidence to say anything because it was my first baby so I thought I didn't have a choices. I was just like a piece of meat, the power display between them and their ' knowledge of what was right' was abuse. I was struggling with breastfeeding and was told my the midwife's my baby would have a low IQ if I don't breastfeed and the worst thing I could do was give him formula. This fucked up my brain so badly as spiraled down and down onto deeper depression and even hearing my baby cry could make my heart rate spike and I started

to dread my own child because feeding him correlated to excruciating pain. I only started to bond with my baby when my actual GP diagnosed me with a condition saying I was never going to be able to breast feed. Life went from black to white and I could finally enjoy my baby. Those midwives stripped me of this time with my baby. I will always hate them for doing that to us . And it was all lies. I deep dived into the literature for a long time after and there is absolutely no evidence of this. The next two babies I had i shows up at the hospital with my bottles and formula and told them I'm bottle feeding and it's not up for discussion - they still tried to put their breast is best propaganda into me but immediately backed off once I started quoting double blind clinical trials.

My overall impression of the WHOLE experience was like all the care during and after birth was always only about the baby. Nobody cared about the mothers physical or mental health. She was pushed aside. Ignored. Worthless . She was encouraged to sacrifice her own health for the baby. I honestly don't know how any woman comes out or the experience untethered. I will never fully recover from it . Almost every woman I know was treated similar. Men would never put up with being treated this way.