

Submission
No 328

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

I birthed my first baby in Hospital in 2022.

Labour started at home - I had a bath with a sachet of bath salts / flowers in the bath which were a mix of magnesium salts and dried flowers to support relaxation. Once I got out of the bath I realised my waters had broken which followed by my mucus plug releasing shortly after.

I fell very ill approximately 6 hours after stepping out of the bath, and eventually I was diagnosed with chorioamnionitis.

In line with hospital 'policy' upon realising my waters had broken I went straight to the hospital for a cervical check to see how dilated I was. I was sent home shortly after as everything appeared to be progressing normally.

On my way home from the hospital I knew something was not right but as I was sent home, I thought this was just labour. I didn't have foetal movements for approximately 7 hours after that, however was in and out of sleep only waking to verbalise the pain I was in to my partner.

I awoke the next morning with extreme rigors, vomiting and weakness.

My partner called the nurse to tell her that we should come into the hospital sooner, to which my nurse replied "this is all normal" (my first traumatic moment).

At this point I yelled out in the background to tell her I was not having any foetal movements to which she replied 'you can come in if you want' (a second traumatic moment).

We went into the hospital and I was placed on the CTG monitor. My daughter's heart rate was 196BPM - my partner asked why it was so high & the same nurse stated 'it was normal'. (A third traumatic moment).

I am a practicing paramedic for NSW health and at this stage in labour I knew that something was severely wrong. All of the interactions and comments not only minimised how acutely unwell I was, the staff also acted as though I was a hypochondriac.

Shortly after tests were done a sense of emergency came over my OB as results found that I was septic. The staff still urged me to process labour vaginally with the help of syntocin.

Moments later as I continued to labour, my main OB and a second OB stood in front of me and argued about the intricacies of the situation to which I advised, 'I understand that I am very unwell and that I am absolutely not going to be able to progress with a vaginal labour. I want a cesarean and I want one now.'

All other cesarean births were cancelled and I was wheeled into theatre about an hour after MY decision was made.

I believe the main trauma's were stemmed from being made to feel silly and histrionic from the first nurse I was in contact with.

The traumatic events continued as the two senior doctors argued in front of me about how they should treat without having a conversation with me or seeking consent about how I wanted my birth to progress. I would like to add that the second senior OB made me feel seen, she was arguing that they should proceed with a cesarean birth as she believed it was ridiculous he wanted me to progress and attempt to birth vaginally.

In addition I had too many vaginal examinations, this was because my main OB (the one that proceeded to perform the surgery) didn't 'believe' how dilated the nurse advised I was - He

insisted he did another one. I should have said no because it was unnecessary and very prolonged and painful - I really believe it should not have happened.

The surgery was a success, the OB was very careful and particular in the surgery and the rest of my time in hospital overall was fine (despite reoccurring infections) and I felt supported on the maternity ward by the nurses and doctors.

6 weeks following the birth of my daughter I had a follow up appointment with the operating OB to see how I was going and the cesarean scar was healing.

The appointment was traumatic, especially as I was there by myself. For the duration of the appointment he sat on google reading out all the things that could have happened if I did not have a cesarean birth - the birth that I chose because I knew they did not have time to argue over my care.

The OB then went on to read out loud all the things that could have occurred to my daughter if the infection had spread to her (as the infection was seen to be tracking down the umbilical cord), the conditions he listed included MS, Brain damage, death, maternal death & the list continues.

I walked out feeling completely unsupported, all he did was recap the entire traumatic experience for me and did not offer any support or ask how I was mentally coping.

There is so much more that could be said, however this is all that I have time and capacity for at this stage.