

Submission
No 330

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

Birth trauma at Hospital under the care of midwives and obstetrics team.

My first and only child, is currently 19 months old. He was a long, tough pregnancy due to suffering hyperemesis gravidarum whilst still working as a fulltime emergency department nurse.

I went on maternity leave at 35 weeks and by 40+2 went into spontaneous labour around 7pm home on a Tuesday night. After trying to labour at home as long as possible, by Wednesday 2am I needed to go to hospital, fatigued and frankly quite scared I was getting close due to the frequent and insurmountable pain I was in. My initial birthing suite midwives; and , Both absolute angels, I found myself by 10am being told I need an emergency cesarean due to fetal distress and failure to progress. As it turns out I was only 2cm dilated and my son's HR dropping far too low during each contraction. I was ok with this decision, within 30mins I was in OT and my partner was in the waiting room of OT, waiting to come in.

During my cesarean everything was going ok, I heard the cries of my son which helped set in an instant sigh of relief, they quickly showed him over the curtain which unfortunately I was unable to see due to the curtain, they wrapped him up into a big burrito and placed him on my chest, I was unable to see his face or feel his skin. Within minutes I asked my husband to remove him, something was not right.

I became extremely nauseous, trying to vomit with arms wide open in my back, my vomit being suctioned from my mouth, then in an instant it was lights out for me.

I can only describe this moment as what I would imagine someone in a coma would feel like, I was unable to move (at least the parts I could feel), I couldn't open my eyes or talk, scream or cry. But I was there, in my head only. I could hear the panic of the OT team, I could hear them say I spiked a fever, I was tachycardic at over 150 beats per minute. I could hear them say my blood pressure was so low I was almost put on vasopressors to help bring it back up, I could feel them jabbing me again and again to get more IV access, painful everytime I was completely and entirely still not responsive. I could hear them call for the consultant to come in and to get on the phone to ICU. I could hear my husband crying behind me thinking I was going to die, and that's exactly how I felt too.

After a few hours in OT, I eventually was able to "come to", I was able to grunt, and slightly open my eyes, I was transferred to recovery where I spent about the next 6 hours. I was seen by a few medical teams, I begged to not go to ICU, I was getting better, if I go to ICU I won't get to see my son or my husband until I'm back on the ward, thankfully I was able to stay in recovery until I was vitally stable for the ward. They refused to let me see my son in recovery, he needed to stay in the special care nursery as he was being treated for neonatal sepsis, so my husband sent me a photo of him, finally I got to see his face.

Finally onto the ward, the midwives.... Oh the midwives I got post partum were not nice... at all. I can understand to a degree the hospital side of the decision making. But there was so much empathy, despite being hours, about 7 hours of still not seeing my son, I was still 'not allowed' to see him, so I continued to wait.

My husband began to get quite sick, it's been an incredibly long day for both of us, from labour since 7pm the night before, it's now about 8pm, and my husband has not had access to any water or food during this time so naturally he got a headache which made him nauseous. He begged the midwives for panadol but as he wasn't the patient they refused, they gossiped right at our door trying to justify to themselves that he probably has gastro and should leave

the hospital (clinically not gastro but what would an ED Nurse know over a midwife) I couldn't bear for them to tell him to go so I asked him, just to avoid the conflict and pain, especially after our day. Here I am telling my husband to go home and I still haven't met our son.

Finally nightshift clicked over and they let me see him, if felt not how I expected, I missed so much already. I felt excited to see him but it didn't feel right.

The midwives told me when I could see them and when I had to leave, I had no autonomy over me or my son.

A few nights in when my son finally was discharged from SCN, he was in our room, and he started cluster feeding... my boobs were in pain, bleeding and I'd cry every time he latched, I had zero milk supply, I could barely express a drop, yet when my husband and I begged for formula, we were denied, because breast is best right?? I was told to persevere. At no point in my stay did any midwife ever ask to help or watch how I breast feed to make sure it was done right. After what felt like hours upon hours, morning was here, the paediatric doctor and midwife manager were doing their rounds, the Dr had emphasised how dehydrated he was and asked if we were open to formula top ups, we both nearly cried, and told them how desperate we were through the night and how much we begged to no avail.

That morning my nipples were so incredibly sore, last night was relentless, I asked the morning midwife for nipple covers, which I was also denied because 'they aren't used for what you think they are used for', what does that even mean? Again no breast feeding education.

At some point an assistant in midwifery came to do both my vitals and my sons to which I questioned my sons breathing, she agreed and said she'd get the midwife, to which she came back and said 'the midwife said it's fine', but how would she know, she didn't look at my son or even ate food in my room. Dismissed yet again.

During all the medical and nursing rounds was I ever offered mental health support, breast feeding support or even just a debrief on what the f*** just happened a few days earlier. Nothing. But I could go on with the lack of care I received.

It goes on, I find as time goes on I remember more bits and pieces, more pain, anger and frustration.

Change needs to happen, out of all the women I speak to about birth the common trend is we all gave birth trauma, although sometimes a lot wouldn't have changed, there is a lot that should have been different for all of us.