

Submission  
No 401

## INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

**Name:** Name suppressed

**Date Received:** 14 August 2023

---

Partially  
Confidential

My son was born in April 2019 and I was managed by [REDACTED] Hospital - [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Local Health District. My pregnancy was managed by the Medical Clinic due to having a borderline low PAPP-A result.

I was having regular growth scans and medical clinic follow up. I was also told that I might not be able to go full term depending on scan results...

I had issues with the lack of consistency in my management between various Registrars, poor communication, inappropriate language and bedside manner, unable to make an informed decision unless I found the evidence, information and policies myself.

I was doing shared care with my GP and hardly anything was ever sent to her from the clinic. It was always withheld from her, even though she did the referral. I remember a Registrar always giving me a hard time about my weight and BMI.

He would often use body shaming language and would make remarks about my weight harming my unborn child. I remember him lecturing me over the fact that I had not done an early GTT and my GP did not see any point for me to do one until necessary. This was roughly 2 weeks away from when I would be due to have one. However, if it was a normal result, I would have needed to do another one again.

When I refused, he told me I needed to get permission off the OB not to do the test early and kept telling me how my weight and BMI would harm my child and referred to my previous early term miscarriage. When I did my GTT, I did the test at a private pathology clinic for various reasons. When I went back to the clinic, the same Registrar told me there was no way a woman of my size and weight wouldn't have gestational diabetes and I needed to do the test again at the hospital because the private clinic was wrong. I refused.

After attending 4 weekly growth scans for PAPP-A management from 20 weeks until 36 weeks, everything was deemed okay. I remember asking a Medical Officer in the clinic at 34 weeks regarding my ongoing scan results and if I could go full term and into spontaneous labour?

The medical officer at the time agreed that from a PAPP-A point of view everything was fine. However, they went through my file and proceeded to tell me, "Unlikely, given your size and how fat you are. If you went into spontaneous labour, your labour would most likely stall because you're too fat."

She then suggested an induction, which I wasn't happy about. I could not understand why and was not happy to have one. Without my consent, an induction was booked at this time

for the projected due date. The midwives at the time of booking were inquiring and kept asking why it was being booked and why so early?

The medical officer stated that because of public holidays around my due date it had to be booked early. The pressure placed on me and my body to do what it was meant to do by their deadline was very stressful.

I don't think public holidays or my BMI should have had any factors into the Doctors trying to force an induction of labour onto me.

No paperwork was ever signed by me consenting for this and it was still booked. The only reason why it was cancelled was because my son came naturally and spontaneously before my due date.

I was becoming more anxious and stressed so I booked a birthing Doula and never looked back. I felt much more supported and heard having her support.

She was able to guide me and inform me of things more than what the Drs were - filling in the gaps so to speak. But some things were still overly controlled by the Drs and given how late I hired her too, I just didn't have the early rapport and time really. It's not mine or her fault. She tried to help me, regarding GBS. I just was too overwhelmed and to be honest, it's not her job. Quite often Doulas are filling gaps that they shouldn't have to because of the lack of transparency and information from Doctors and Midwives.

They tried forcing me into a stretch and sweep just before I went into labour. I told them I didn't want one and I started losing my mucus plug and felt like things were happening as nature intended in its own time. The Dr still put gloves on and everything and said, what's the problem, I don't know what the big issue is? Really tried to coerce me into having it done and wasn't happy I declined.

I was also treated as GBS positive without an official swab. I did a urinalysis in September 2018, very early into pregnancy, was likely contaminated and they never rectified it or offered a repeat or swab. They insisted I was GBS positive.

GBS management is so questionable. If I tested negative a week before labour, I could be positive the day of labour.

What happens to all of those babies that are treated as negative, in these situations?

I was not given correct or much information, evidence or policy regarding GBS positive management.

I was coerced into having IV antibiotics during my labour and they then kept fluids going throughout my birth.

Both things would definitely refuse today if it had this chance. I never got given all of the information regarding this. Medical Officers never presented the information properly.

in full facts "The risk doubles for your baby.....

"Doubles from what?" But as soon as I asked questions, or wanted more information, I was always silenced.

Having IV fluids during my labour meant that I was continually attached to a pole, I wasn't allowed to hop in the bath and have a water birth (even though fluids weren't running at that point. I was also struggling to pass urine at this point of my labour and they gave IVF. My bladder got full making my labour harder and longer.

I received an intermittent catheter post labour to drain my bladder. They wouldn't let me urinate in a pan or on the toilet.

Post birth there were 2 grazes and a small tear. I was not told about them and whether or not the tear was knitting nicely together without much blood. Had I been told and aware of things, I would have refused stitches for my grazes. If I fell over and grazed my knee, I don't need stitches. So why did they stitch my grazes? For my minor tear, I will never know if it could have healed on its own or not. I wasn't given the choice.

Day 5 post-partum I started having pain and I was able to pass urine properly. This got progressively worse. I called the maternal health unit overnight-heading into day 6 postpartum. They tried to convince me not to come into hospital, stating I just need to do my pelvic floor exercises and see my women's health physio. Logically, my women's health physio wasn't going to see me until 12-week post-partum at least.

The midwife still wasn't happy for me to present to the post-natal ward. I said I would go to ED instead. The midwife told me I wasn't allowed. I said I don't need anyone's permission to present to the emergency department, then the midwife told me to come in.

I was unable to locate my pain properly. Everything felt different and confusing for me. I was also unable to describe things properly. I was so tired and in so much pain I know I probably did not make a lot of sense, but they're midwives, surely, they're used to dealing with women in a similar state? I was treated so poorly.

My concerns once on the ward weren't taken very seriously. They tested my urine-urinalysis on the ward and then sent it to pathology for formal testing. I had no pain relief. I was unable to pass urine and it hurt so much. I wasn't able to walk easily either because it hurt so much.

I tried explaining to them that I found my labour easier and less painful than the pain I was in. I went from having no pain relief and 0.5L/min of Nitrous Oxide to absolutely nothing postpartum, but now I was needing regular paracetamol and ibuprofen and it wasn't even helping my pain.

No one listened. Not one single person listened to me and treated me with any decency or respect.

The on-call OBGYN at the time came and spoke to me and mocked me for thinking that I had an internal stitch, stating that that would not be possible and they wouldn't stitch there.

No one had told me where my stitches were and what all the terminologies meant, so I had no idea where my stitches were and to what extent my tears were. All I knew was the pain and the feelings I was getting.

I was getting pressure and pulling inside and it felt like my stitches were pulling. However, I was also getting excruciating pain in my lower back and abdomen too. And excruciating pain when trying to pass urine. The urgency to pass urine was very strong and frequent, but I was only able to pass very small amounts all the time.

The OBGYN Registrar on call insisted on doing an internal examination. I was trying to understand why. To this day, she did it without my full consent and did it to prove her point about me not having stitches internally.

She then proceeded to inform me I likely have a urinary tract infection and was observed to be irritated that I was unable to have penicillins and cephalosporins, due to my high sensitivities.

I never stated I was allergic, but that when I do have those antibiotics I cannot stop vomiting and I end up in hospital requiring rehydration fluids and anti-emetics. She was observed to be irritated, becoming very abrupt with me, rolling her eyes and scoffing at me.

She told me that this is not a proper allergy. She told me I was being ridiculous and should take those antibiotics because it makes her job too hard.

I explained to her what I had had 2 previous times I had had a urinary tract infection. She ignored me.

I still had not had anything for pain and everything was getting worse and worse. Morning was approaching and I was so tired and in so much pain. Still nothing was being done for me.

No one questioned my intermittent catheter and put 2 and 2 together to think I likely had a bladder infection from the catheter I had post labour.

In the meantime, the midwives were fussing over son because his Chest TCB level was Chest 256 and Head 225 and he would need a formal test done plus potential therapy.

My son did appear yellow under lights in the hospital. However, my husband and I tried explaining that his jaundice was never that high, a formal had to be done and treatment was never needed/considered.

I kept stating the midwives at home service were monitoring the levels and each visit it was going further down. The day prior to my presentation at the hospital, my Home Midwife was discharging my son from a jaundiced point of view because he was almost off the chart in a reduction.

My husband and I were trying to explain this and also stated he was feeding very well, especially since my milk had transitioned from colostrum, his output was amazing with lots of large wet nappies and faeces.

The midwives told me this has nothing to do with jaundice, when it's actually how the body eliminates bilirubin.

I also kept asking them to check the midwife at home notes. It did not seem correct to me that this was going on.

Both my husband and I ended up being counselled by a Paediatrician for neglect of treatment. I have never felt so humiliated and insulted.

To be a FTM and to want the best care for myself and child and to be treated like this was disgusting. The only thing the Midwives had to do, was read my notes from home and clarify it all added up.

We explained the situation to the Doctor, but the Paediatrician cannot access the midwifery at home services notes, which is ludicrous.

Surely the 2 different systems could talk to each other at the very least.

No one had bothered to check our history – not one single midwife – who apparently can access the home notes.

Morning shift had come in for handover. I had previously told the night shift I was meant to be seeing my home midwife in the morning, but I was in hospital so I wanted them to know I was in hospital.

No one told her and the Midwife saw my name and was shocked. I was in hospital and couldn't believe what the Midwives were saying about me!

She popped in to see me and find out what was going on. She advocated for me to have pain relief - it was really hard to get anything charted. The OBGYN Registrar on call stated I was drug seeking to my home midwife. It was very hard to convince any Dr to chart me something.

My home Midwife also thought the TCB results were strange. When she double checked everything, the first person to do so, she discovered they had actually charted his results on the incorrect gestational age chart. My son's results were charted on a pre-term 37 wk chart instead of full term 38 wk plus chart.

It might not sound like it makes a big difference, but it does! His results went from requiring treatment under lights to his results being almost off the chart as not needing treatment!

His results were even better than what they were at home. Just to be treated this way and counselled by a Paediatrician - when it was their mistake!

Not one person apologised. My home Midwife did but I didn't need to hear it from her and actually if it wasn't for her and her advocacy, who knows what would have happened. Unnecessary stay in hospital with phototherapy.

I was finally discharged home on antibiotics but not the ones that I had previously mentioned to Drs as what had been given to me beforehand because apparently it needed approval and it was slowing things down. However, the one I was sent home with wasn't effective for the infection and I started to become septic.

I was lucky that my midwife called my GP and spoke to her and I got an urgent appointment to try and avoid going back into hospital again after everything that had happened.

She determined that given my pain too it was likely bladder infection not a Urinary Tract infection and was concerned I was going to have a kidney infection and go septic.

My GP immediately changed my antibiotics to what has worked previously, and repeated my bloods. She told me [REDACTED] wasn't allowing her to access my blood results and it was really difficult to get any pathology results out of them too.

She kept contacting me to make sure I was improving. After one dose of the new antibiotics I was starting to feel better and kept improving. My blood results came back and my CRP was very elevated and as was my white cell count. Everything definitely pointed to a severe infection.

Lots of antibiotics were given to me from Labour and in my postpartum care. Some of which could have been avoided. I didn't need anything for GBS/ I wanted to refuse, I shouldn't have had an intermittent catheter but did and ended up with a severe infection.

I should have been given the antibiotics that I had told them had worked previously, knowing that clearly my flora is sensitive to that antibiotic. So I ended up with a 3rd antibiotic.

I then ended up with severe oral, vaginal and milk thrush.

I never got a proper apology about anything.

I also requested a copy of my medical notes. To my horror, the OBGYN Registrar who saw me, performed a vaginal examination without consent and who humiliated me and refused to give me pain relief - never documented anything in my medical notes. Nothing exists in there to say she even saw me except a midwife note, but the note doesn't say who. [REDACTED] never gave me this information. I was always shutdown and dismissed by complaints.



I wanted to make a complaint to HCCC and AHPRA but without this information I wasn't able to.

When falling pregnant with my second child end of 2021, I started to do caseload at [REDACTED] and my PAPP-A results were basically identical.

Drs in the clinic were treating me very similarly to when I had [REDACTED]. Although the management was different and with an almost identical result, no one could explain to me why or what had changed.

To ask such questions always seems to offend Medical Officers. As a result the medical officer tried referring me to a Social Worker on the basis of refusing medications that based on the information I had received it wasn't warranted or needed. The Social Worker declined the referral, but I just find it so insulting.

I also didn't consent to Get Healthy Service and was referred to it anyway. I ended up receiving a phone call in my pregnancy and kept saying I didn't want it.

Then early postpartum, they called again asking me about my fitness and weight - something I didn't need so early in my postpartum period.

I wish the clinic wasn't so hell bent on fat shaming women in pregnancy. My BMI was high, but I was healthy and active. I had lost significant weight prior to my second pregnancy and also was a lot more active and fitter. But because I didn't fit into their box of healthy weight they straight away treated me horribly.

It's so demoralising. I felt like a cow going into the clinic and being weighed all the time. I felt like all they cared about was my weight and they never cared for me as person.

With previous history and experiences plus covid still causing ridiculous rules in the system - I opted for a Private Midwife and home birth. I had my same Doula from my son's birth too.

Now let me tell you, I gave birth 40+3, spontaneous labour, my daughter was 4.945kg/10.91 pounds. I didn't have gestational diabetes, my placenta was very healthy - controversial PAPP-A played no part in my placenta health.

I had no issues pushing her out and she was born naturally at home with no complications with her or me. I had less damage and didn't need grazes stitched and was able to refuse stitching of another tear because it came back together very nicely and wasn't actively

bleeding. No GBS testing or treatment. No intermittent catheters. My midwife never even tested TCB because my baby looked fine and she transitioned my milk very quickly and never showed signs of jaundice.

My care was so much better. The continuity of care, the respect, I was always informed, always asked to be touched and prodded. Vaginal examinations were never forced on me.

Why does the medical officers and system try to rush women, why do they unnecessarily need to intervene, like standing back and allowing things to progress and happen is unacceptable? Do they have to be in control or try to be, even though birth is something that can't be and shouldn't be.

There's a time and place for interventions but I think we are too quick to intervene. Women are told their bodies are too fat, broken, old, their babies are too fat to give birth. The medical system doesn't know anymore how to manage a physiological and natural birth. It's like it's unnatural for women to birth naturally their way anymore.

How and where a woman wants to birth should largely be her choice and left up to her to make decisions.

The risks of the system forcing so much on women and not allowing women to make informed decisions, means women will birth more underground/ free birth, especially if they can't afford a Private Practicing Midwife.

Thank you for hearing my story.