

Submission
No 312

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

I am a 35 year old mother of three children aged, 7, 4 and 2 years old. I reside in Sydney, NSW and have delivered in both Public and Private hospitals. All three of my births were vaginal.

My experience with birth trauma started in the OB office, day before I was to have my baby, when my OB unbeknownst to me called and booked me in for an induction without consulting me. He said he was worried about amniotic fluid levels and size of my baby, even though my 3rd trimester growth scan that he sent me for showed my baby was fine and growing within normal range, and my levels were all fine. I was then induced even though it is not something I wanted to do. But when your doctor makes you feel like you are being irresponsible if you do not listen to them, it plays on your mind and you question yourself. What followed was an extremely painful birth and I ended up getting an epidural even though this was against my birth plan. I could not tolerate the pain of an induced labour. The only way I can explain the pain was if two semi trailers were attached to my spine and both were going 100Kms each in opposite directions. Despite my OB being down the road and knowing I was 10 cms, he missed the birth of my son. Thankfully, the amazing midwife I had made me feel very supported.

After this experience, I said I would not allow myself to be induced again. I switched OB's. This new OB was very conservative, and I expressed not wanting to be induced early on. Thankfully my daughter came at 39 weeks exactly. She was born in 1 hour and 51 minutes after first sign of labour. I rushed to the hospital and despite screaming and obviously in a lot of pain and in active labour, I was not transferred to the birthing room until a cannula was put in my arm to administer antibiotics (I was positive to Group Strep B in my first pregnancy, so they wanted to treat me as positive in any subsequent pregnancies I was told). I was eventually put on a wheel chair and wheeled out where I started to involuntarily push my baby out. I barely made it to the bed in the birthing unit. This sounds like a traumatic experience and while it was shocking as it happened so fast, I would take that experience over my first birth or what was to come - my third birth. It's worth noting that my OB did not make it to this birth either.

Upon going to the OB for my first appointment at 10 weeks with my 3rd child, my OB expressed to me that I would most likely be induced this pregnancy to avoid having another precipitous labour. I expressed I was against this due to the trauma I experienced with my first birth. He said we would discuss. Throughout my pregnancy he proceeded to mention induction and each time I pushed back.

When I was in my 3rd trimester, my OB started mentioning that my baby was on the smaller side and induction was likely. I again pushed back. He sent me for additional scans. Which showed that while my baby was on the smaller side, she was within normal range. I was even sent to the Feto-Maternal Unit at _____ hospital to be checked where I was told by a Professor that my baby was fine. She was on the smaller side, but amniotic fluid levels and baby size were fine. I was about 36 weeks now. My OB told me despite these results I needed to be induced. I pushed back again. He put me on twice weekly appointments and offered me a stretch and sweep at 38 weeks which I agreed to as it felt like it might give baby a nudge to be born on its own terms, instead of resorting to an induction. As 39 weeks approached, my OB expressed that he would not allow me to go past 39 weeks. He said he had to book me in for an induction. Again, backed into the corner and questioning everything, I agreed and was

booked to have my baby at 38 weeks and 4 days. The private hospital birthing units were full closer to my 39 week date which proved to me how many doctors prefer to schedule births in, rather than let women go into labour themselves.

As I was so against induction, my OB and I settled on breaking of my waters only and allowing me 4 hours for contractions to start. In the lead up to the date of birth, I would cry every night. I was so hopeful my baby would come naturally. What should have been an exciting time, was riddled with stress. My baby was healthy and growing well. Multiple scans and doctors confirmed this. It did not make sense. It literally felt like my OB had his own agenda and preferred to just schedule in my birth to suit him. Bringing life into this world is a highly emotional and exciting time for mothers and it was feeling so forced and unnatural to me by having to agree to a date set by this man.

While at the hospital and in the process of getting my waters broken, my OB, with hand and what felt like his arm inside of me, told me that my baby's head was too high and that "we are going to need to start synto". I panicked as this was exactly what I did not want. Thankfully I had explained my predicament to the lovely midwife at the hospital and she knew my wishes and thankfully she championed for me and said, "it's her third baby doctor, that's what the contractions are for". She later explained to me that women who have had multiple babies, their babies' heads tend to not be so low as first time mothers. The OB, arm still inside of me, looked at me, I looked at my husband, the midwife and back to him and asked if I could please have some time to see if I could get my contractions going. He then said, "We are just trying to have a healthy baby". He said he would only allow me to not go on syntocin if I stayed attached to CTG monitor and would allow me 2 hrs (instead of 4 hrs) before giving me syntocin. The fact that he tried to change the plan, and then make me feel inadequate in my decision making while still inside of me felt like the hugest violation and one that I think of often.

Thankfully I was able to get my contractions going and deliver a beautiful healthy baby girl. Then while I was in my golden hour with baby attached at the breast having her first suckle, a midwife came in asking to measure the baby as my OB wants to know her weight. As a third time experienced mother fed up with the broken maternity system and not about to stroke a man's ego in my Golden hour which I would never get back. I refused. He could find out later.

I truly hope this inquiry makes a change to the maternity system and the treatment of mothers.