

Submission
No 410

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

Dear Members of the Committee,

I am writing to share my personal experiences on birth trauma.

As a woman who has personally experienced birth trauma I hope to shed light on the impact it can have on individuals and families.

I have experienced birth trauma firsthand, during the birth of my first child.

The specifics of my own encounter with birth trauma are as follows, in May 2015 I gave birth to my daughter, I presented to the hospital in active labour, my labour progressed fast and it had become aware that the baby was showing signs of distress, I was then advised that I must lay on the bed. This was extremely uncomfortable and made coping with pain very difficult. I was told by one of the midwives to "be quiet" I'm sure anyone that has ever been in labour that this can prove to be near impossible. This made me feel belittled and I didn't want this midwife in my presence.

As my labour progressed I started having involuntary urges to push, not know what was happening to my body, the midwife told me to "stop doing that" I proceeded to tell her I wasn't pushing on purpose and I had no control.

One of the midwives decided to examine my cervix at this time and I was fully dilated, that it would be okay to start pushing.

The midwife instructed that I must have my knees pulled up and even shouted at my husband to hold me legs, this was uncomfortable and not how I planned on birthing. The last position I wanted to be in was on my back and my knees near my head. I had remained drug free throughout my labour in hopes that I could birth in a position that would reduce my risk of tearing.

I birthed my daughter 4.7kg but had been told that I had torn, no body told me the severity of my tear, the OB proceeded to stitch me in the birthing suite, this was excruciating! I now know why it hurt so badly, this was a 3rd degree tear. Something I believe would have been far more effective if don't in surgery, not exposed and in pain after birthing.

After being stitched up I was told to go and take a shower, thankfully my husband was able to help me because no one else was willing to assist.

I then had to walk myself to the hospital room, I was not given any opportunity for pain relief at this stage and no one debriefed me on what had actually happened.

In my room I did have a wonderful midwife whom took the time listen to me and provided me with far more care than I had received so far. She checked my stitches because I was in agony, her response "my goodness, you poor thing" She gave me ice packs and painkillers, and found me food. It was the first time that I felt safe and respected.

I was told someone would come and talk to me about the birth and no one even spoke to me about what had happened until the day I was to be discharged.

I was told of my 3rd degree tear, I wasn't given any care instructions and it was shrugged off as if it wasn't anything major. My daughter suffered what I was told a "slight shoulder dystopia" but again was spoken as if it wasn't a big deal.

I had no follow up care, for me or my daughter in regards to her shoulder.

I felt alone, dismissed and traumatised by the whole experience, my husband also.

I followed up with a woman's health physio on my own accord after experiencing symptoms of weakened pelvic floor and bladder prolapse. she explained exactly what happened to my body and really sympathised for how I was treated, my daughter also.

We both had to undergo physical therapy for a period of 18 months me for my pelvic floor and my daughter for her shoulder. It was my women health physio that followed up on my Internal stitches were healing with ultrasound, this should have been included in my post birth check ups not something I must seek after myself. This is also a huge out of pocket expense that should be included in post birth care after a traumatic tear.

Having to deal with a traumatic birth, poor treatment, very poor advice or acknowledgment from the doctors after birth has impacted my mental health, it still does.

Things need to change, it's not okay to be or dismissed as if it's not a big deal. It's a huge deal, patients deserved to be informed what's happening/ happened to their body. I truly hope other mothers never have to experience this in the future.

Thank you for considering my submission. I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute my experiences and viewpoints to the committee's ongoing inquiry.

With sincere appreciation