

Submission  
No 431

## INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

**Name:** Name suppressed

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Partially  
Confidential

After many years of miscarriages and disappointment my husband and I were finally overjoyed to be blessed with a viable pregnancy. Many factors lead up to the final straw of my traumatic experience including being told at my 20 week scan that my baby was below the percentile with growth and I would need to make fortnightly visits to [REDACTED] hospital for growth scans. At my first appointment I was given a whole range of reasons why this could be happening to me including the possibility of sever disability, placenta failure and infection. I was given the option to do nothing or to investigate further. At that appointment my husband and I decided to continue with investigations but would have to wait 2 weeks for any results. This in itself was heartbreaking knowing that the baby we have longed for could possibly be compromised.

After a long 2 weeks wait I was given the news that no chromosomal abnormalities were detected, however, this did not rule out infection or problems with the placenta. I was told there could be a possibility of having to deliver at 32 - 35 weeks. I would continue to see [REDACTED] every 2 weeks until my delivery date. At my last scan I was told induction would happen at 38 weeks with my local hospital. Fast forward to 38 weeks exactly I went into spontaneous labour and was excited I avoided induction. Contractions were hard and fast from the get go. When examined in the labour ward I was 5cm dilated and requested an epidural. The anaesthetist arrived fairly quickly and spoke with the in charge to go ahead with administration of the epidural.

After an hour I was still experiencing severe pain and was told it would kick in soon. I could still feel the same sensation of the ice everywhere the doctor put it but was told to wait. It reached 3 hours of agony before I was rolled over to see that the epidural had detached and was leaking. I was then examined to see how I had progressed. At this stage I am at 8cm and was told I was too close for the epidural. I begged and begged and was finally granted provided I sat still for the procedure. I was able to control my body through each contraction to have that epidural placed. I finally felt a sense of relief. During my relief my babies heart rate had started to sporadically drop in which a doctor was called in to check. The doctor arrived and was not overly concerned. I was given a medicine to help bring on my contractions faster and get things moving.

Over the next few hours the heart rate continued to go up and down. The midwife suggested examining me in which the doctor said no as it had not been 2 hours since my last. I was starting to experience the intense contraction pain on my left side but was told it was normal and to roll onto my side. I had rolled over and still heart rate was becoming a big concern. I was examined and told I was 10cms and had to get this baby out. My catheter was quickly removed and I started pushing. After sometime of pushing my baby was not moving any further down and a vacuum was placed on his head. I continued to push with machines beeping around me Anna room full of people.

My baby was in distress and it was decided that I would be sent up to theatre for an emergency c section. Another catheter was placed causing injury to my urethra. I continued to push on the way up to theatre as instructed by the medical team. My husband was dressed

and ready to go in with me. I was taken in and told that I would be having a general anaesthetic. I knew straight away the neither my husband or I would get to experience that special moment we had been so excited for. I awoke in recovery and immediately asked if I had a baby. Thankfully everything was ok. He had a slow start but had improved and needed no help. I was asked if my baby could have formula as I was unable to see him due to being in recovery. I felt that I was unable to provide for him so agreed.

During my time in recovery the doctor had told me they needed to keep me in theatre for an extended period of time to explore my bladder as it had been bleeding but they were unable to find anything wrong. I was finally taken back to the ward hardly being able to keep my eyes open from the anaesthetic. A midwife handed me my baby and advised skin to skin contact and latching to my breast. I was so tired I could barely hold him. I felt so disconnected to him and did not experience that 'joy' I thought I would. I was given a pca to help with the pain and continued with a catheter. Once the evening rolled around I handed my baby to the midwives and said I was unable to look after him as I was too exhausted.

The midwife took him for the night which I was so thankful for. The next day came and I was told a social worker would be visiting and someone from the mental health team as they felt what I was experiencing could be a sign of postpartum depression. It was extremely emotional and I advised them I didn't feel love for him and I missed that connection. I had said I was too scared to go home because I didn't want to fail. During day two as each nurse handed over to the other there were mixed opinions on breast feeding and formula. I had a nurse tell me I had to breast feed and literally milked me in front of my family.

My breasts were very sore but again I was advised this is all normal and part of the journey. During the night shift my pca had run out and I was told pain relief would be in the form of a tablet. I had no issues with this. It was around 3/4am when I buzzed for some pain relief. The nurse advised me that she did not want to call the doctor and she was not going to give me anything. I told her not to worry and she left. The other nurse on came into my room a few minutes later and apologised on her behalf as her behaviour was unacceptable. At this point I burst into tears and explained I wouldn't have asked for it unless I needed.

I was then given endone as charted. The next day arrived and the nurses were excited to get me discharged. I again explained that I felt I wasn't ready to go home and wanted to stay. I felt like I was being a burden but they agreed to keep me. The day went by and still struggled to feel the connection with my baby but was managing to feed him and meet his needs. The night staff came on for handover. As they were outside my room I could hear them talking about me and my situation. One of the nurses said 'why is she still here' this again made me feel like a failure and on came the wave of emotions. I decided that I had to go home the next day regardless of how I felt. I made a complaint to the NUM regarding the refusal for pain relief in which I was told they had, had problems with this particular nurse before. I find this rather concerning.

After being discharged I presented back to maternity as I felt like my insides had fallen out and nothing felt right. I was examined and told I had a small prolapse and I would need to see a physio for pelvic floor treatment. In the next coming days I started to experience incontinence both urine and faecal. I dismissed it as part of the healing process and thought everything would go back to normal. I continue to suffer 7 months post partum. I have fear of leaving the house incase I have an embarrassing accident, I don't want to socialise or eat in public. I suffer with depression and anxiety due to these issues. I am currently awaiting appointments to see specialists for investigation. I've been told by the gyno, I could have suffered nerve damage that may not be repairable. Given that I am 33 years old and having to wear nappies possibly for the rest of my life is awful. I love everyday in fest that I will soil myself. My whole experience has traumatised me to a huge degree. I am really hopeful this will go away and I can start enjoying life and my baby to my usual happy and social person I was previously.