

Submission
No 438

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

I gave birth at [REDACTED] Hospital in August 2022. I was initially meant to give birth at [REDACTED] Private under the care of obstetrician Dr [REDACTED], but unfortunately my baby was of breech presentation and he was untrained in delivering breech babies vaginally. He tried to convince me to choose an elective cesarean but I instead chose to give birth at [REDACTED] Public Hospital as they have a team of trained midwives and OBs in vaginal breech births. It was all so stressful to change providers in the final fortnight of my pregnancy, all while receiving fear-mongering messages from my original private hospital team. I ended up birthing at the public hospital as a private patient, refusing an induction (which I also felt extremely pressured into by the private team), and the obstetrician who assisted in the delivery was a friend and colleague of Dr [REDACTED]'s, his name was Dr [REDACTED].

During the delivery, Dr [REDACTED] came right at pushing time and told the midwife to 'turn her around' and make me give birth on my back in stirrups. He had terrible bedside manner and spoke harshly to me, telling me I was 'terrible' and 'pathetic' at pushing and it was 'clear' I had never done that before. His negativity and patronising language left me feeling incredibly defeated. Furthermore, he decided to teach me to push by shoving his fingers harshly into my vagina between contractions and yelled at me to 'push out my fingers' as a practice. This was the most pain I have ever felt in my life, far worse than all the contractions combined, and I could only scream and writhe on the table. I begged him to stop, but he would just say 'try again', and push his hand inside me. Eventually, Dr [REDACTED] who had arrived to observe as my secondary doctor, told Dr [REDACTED] 'I think that's enough of the fingers, mate'. To which Dr [REDACTED] just shrugged and said in an arrogant tone, 'Most women find that helpful'. Finally, it was time to push the baby out. Dr [REDACTED] had me put on syntocin to make the contractions last longer. This caused the baby's heart to struggle and he decided to perform an episiotomy, which I understand must have been the correct professional choice to assist my child, however he did so without asking or telling me what was happening - I only knew because I heard the sound of scissors cutting through flesh. It was horrifying.

On paper I had a highly successful birth, a short (14hr total) labour with no drugs and a healthy baby with an immediate Apgar score of 9. However I emerged from this experience emotionally traumatised, feeling like I had been the victim and an unwilling main character in a horror movie.

My hope is that obstetricians can be trained to assist women in vaginal breech births and regularly update their training -- from my understanding, Dr [REDACTED]'s method was what was taught 20+ years ago, not the modern VBB delivery which is a gravity-based position and 'hands off the breech' -- and I also hope that OBs can have good bedside manner to understand birthing women are not animals but actually fully understand what is going on in the room and deserve to be treated with dignity, respect, kindness and in fact passionate encouragement as they face the most intense experience known to human life.

Thanks for taking the time to consider my story. I am open to being contacted if you need any further proof of this experience.