

Submission
No 459

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

I gave birth in January 2023 at [REDACTED] Hospital. I started having mild contractions at 2 am. I had some sleep between 6 and 8, then got up because it was too painful for me to lay down or sit down. In the early afternoon contractions got closer 2 or 3 minutes apart, regular and intense but only 20/30 seconds long. I was so confused (the hospital tells you to go there last minute, when contractions are around 60/90 seconds long and 1 or 2 minutes apart, but this is just average data not reality!) so I called the birthing unit, the lady was not sure either but at the end she told me to go there.

As soon as I got in the birthing suite, at around 4:45 pm, I lost the mucus plug, contractions were strong and close but still short (20/30 sec) but I could already feel a slight urge to push. After one hour of monitoring contractions my midwife suggested me to go home and wait for the contractions to be 60/90 seconds, 1 or 2 minutes apart, otherwise I would have risked an induction if I was not progressing as the hospital wanted!!!!

I didn't want to go home, I was in pain and not able to sit or lay down and at that point I knew it was going to happen soon.

She didn't believe I was that far, relying on length of contractions and on the fact that I was still able to talk and smile at her!!!!

She didn't want to fill up the bath and suggested a vaginal exam later to see where we were at.

In my plan there was absolutely no vag exam during labour, but at that point I insisted to have it straight away so she would believe me and I could stop doubting myself and have the bloody bath filled!!!

She checked and my cervix was more than 5 cm dilated and very floppy. She filled up the bath for me straight away and as I hopped in I felt instant relief. A minute later my water broke.

After 1.15 hours of active pushing, at 9:50 pm my baby was born. We all agreed that luckily I didn't go home!

My contractions were never longer than 30 seconds!!

I hate that I had to insist so badly to be heard and luckily I knew how to advocate for myself, but I think in that moment when you are so vulnerable it's the last thing you want to do. You just want to be heard and to have someone who trusts and guide you, not tries to send you home because you don't fit the hospital standards and statistics!!!!

The third stage was awful. The 3 of us could stay in the bath skin to skin for about 30 min, but I HAD (hospital rule) to birth the placenta within one hour from birth even tho I was not bleeding and I was still recovering. They offered an injection to help it which I refused. My partner took the baby (he was left alone with her to get out of the bath, scared to fall and without knowing what to do) while I, in pain and still in shock, I was trying to pull the umbilical cord while coughing hard as they told me to do!! then they had me on the toilet and then on the bed coughing, pushing and pulling the cord. I was unable to do it hard enough because I was in shock, in pain, looking my baby far from me and ultimately shaking so so badly (NOBODY ever mentioned the afterbirth shaking, and also in that moment the midwives didn't explain it. I thought I was weird and that there was something wrong with my body). So at that point they pushed my belly so deeply and hard, again and again, nothing happened. After that my daughter was given to me to breastfeed just to help the birth of the placenta. So I didn't really get to enjoy that special moment. After they scared me saying because I was unable to push it out, they were going to try with a catheter to empty my bladder to help it. I refused and after a bit more pushing/pulling/coughing, the placenta was out. In my birth plan, that probably nobody read, I said I wanted it to happen naturally, waiting for natural contractions. Sadly, neither I or my partner had the strength to advocate for that to happen. I was too exhausted and in shock, he was too busy taking care of the newborn, so we both were alone managing our own worries. I honestly needed a few days to elaborate what happened and to realise that I was not happy at all with how it went. Still today I feel sad and totally robbed of the experience I wanted it to be. Again, the system tried to decide for me and this time it sadly won.

I needed a couple of stitches. I had to wait one hour for the surgeon to be there, which was fine, what was not fine was that she sewed me like I was a piece of meat and not a person, she was not gentle at all considering I just gave birth, she didn't wait for the anaesthetic to work and didn't blink an eye when I said I was feeling every stitch!

Finally we get moved to our room.

In the 2 days, 2 nights I stayed there I never ever received a meal. The first night a guy came asking if we wanted tea or coffee, and in the morning at 4 am a lady came to wake me up to ask me if I had any dietary requirements to prepare my breakfast, I've never seen the breakfast. We realised all this once we were home, at the hospital we were still in a state of confusion and focused on baby, and we were eating food brought from home.

I wanted a homebirth in the first place, there is only one midwife who does it in the region and she was already booked in. I am seriously thinking to go for a freebirth next time if my only alternative is hospital.