

Submission
No 447

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

My name is [REDACTED] and I am 28 years old. I reside in the [REDACTED] with my partner and 2 beautiful sons, age 4 years old and 4 months old. The birth I experienced trauma in was for my first son in 2018. I experienced a normal pregnancy with no high risk complications, and was overdue with my son. My due date was the 29th of October, however once I went past this date, they said they would go off a earlier scan measurements which made my due date the 31st October. When I came in for a midwife appointment when I was 7 days overdue (from the 29th due date) they completed a stretch and sweep. The OB suggested I need an induction, and said I could either come in on the Friday or the Monday. I asked what the difference would be between the 2 days and OB said baby wouldn't be coming by himself anyway so to book in for the induction on the Friday and get it over and done with. I was not informed of any scans that could be completed to check if bub was growing ok to try and wait until the Monday. I was not informed of any risks with induction or any alternate options. I went into hospital day before induction date and received the gel and was monitored.

They checked my cervix again later and I was dilated a few cm so they didn't do the second lot of gel, and I was admitted overnight for either spontaneous labour or induction to begin Friday. My baby was posterior and I experienced major back pain, which they provided me some medication for. I had contractions all night however not regular and no waters broken. The OB visited me on Thursday to discuss what was happening Friday and said that the baby looked quite large from external view and I would probably need a caesarean anyway as 'he was huge'. As a first time mum I was not sure on the process and was a bit alarmed by this comment, however informed the midwives and OB that i am happy for whatever form of delivery as long as my son and I were safe. On Friday morning (induction day) they gave me the drip and broke my waters. Once contractions started regularly, I had them every few minutes and laboured for hours. The drop was put in at 7:30am and I delivered my son at 10:38pm. I had my cervix checked in the afternoon as I was exhausted and falling asleep between each contraction and I was only dilated a few cm and not progressing.

I received sterile water injections for the back pain from posterior positioning but did not receive any relief from it. I requested to try the gas, but started to inhale the oxygen and vomited. I denied morphine and I requested the epidural around 3pm, it did not work on both sides and I had to be rotated left to right before they turned the epidural all the way up until it worked fully. Once the epidural was working I dilated to 10cm. OB was called in as it was now afterhours and he informed me I needed to start pushing because if I didnt get the baby out soon i would need a caesarean. I informed them again that I was happy for whatever was needed as long as baby and me were safe. I asked for the epidural to be turned down to feel the contractions and control the pushes and it was turned down. Baby was distressed and I believe the epi was turned back up as he needed to come out asap, however I did not ask for it to be turned up. I was pushing for 1.5 hours, had an episiotomy which I was not informed of happening. I then had vacuum and forceps delivery.

I do not remember if I was asked about vacuum or forceps. I ended with a 3b tear with damage to my anal sphincter which was not diagnosed until 2+ years post partum. Paediatrician was called and My son was resuscitated by midwives. Emergency button on wall was pressed and a large amount of people came flooding into the room and my partner and I had no idea what

was going on. I was haemorrhaging which I did not find out about until my 6 week check up with my GP when I read it in my son's blue book. I kept asking if my son was ok and what was happening but it was very chaotic with so many people in the room, blood everywhere and my son not crying. The OB kept counting the minutes whilst trying to stop my haemorrhaging and was screaming each minute saying the baby should be crying by now. My son was being resuscitated behind my partner and he could hear the midwives and paed saying he wasn't going to make it and could see everything going on.

My son's APGARs were 2:3:6, and it stated he did not start breathing until 5 minutes old. My son had right-sided facial palsy from the forceps, a pneumothorax, swallowed meconium, had swelling on his head from the vacuum which they were worried he had internal bleeding, and needed assistance breathing before being transported to another hospital and staying in NICU for 2 days. My partner went up with him in transport and I had to stay in the birthing hospital as I could not move from the epidural yet. I had not seen my son until my Mum eventually asked if I could see him before he was transported. Once he was in NICU I was allowed to leave on Day release to go see him as the hospital he was in didn't have enough beds for me to be admitted to. I left Saturday morning and had to come home Saturday night and my partner came home Saturday night and my son stayed in NICU. He was then released back to my hospital and we drove him home Sunday morning where I stayed in [REDACTED] hospital. A lady came and chatted to my partner and I and explained that she stood back and took notes during the chaos of the birth and that if we had any questions to ask.

I informed her I had no idea what had happened but that it was all so fresh in my brain and I didn't remember much of it that I didn't know what questions to ask. I was very short of breath and they put me on some oxygen and did some bloods, said I was going to need an iron infusion but started me on some iron tablets instead. I was not informed that I had haemorrhaged at all at the hospital and that this could be the cause of low iron and shortness of breath. The OB came and checked my stitches but did not tell me the degree of my tear, nor encourage me to see a physio or any after care for it other than to watch for infection. I had faecal incontinence for over 2 months from the level of the tear. 2 days post birth (whilst still admitted as a patient) I passed huge blood clots and informed the midwives who called the OB to come check me.

The midwife was standing next to my bed chatting to me and the OB came in and said he was going to have a feel of my tummy to check it was ok. The OB gently touched around, then without informing me he squeezed my uterus very hard multiple times and blood and clots came flooding out. I was screaming in agony and the midwife kept apologising saying she had no idea that was about to happen. When my son was a few weeks old, I had to go to emergency as I was very short of breath and had pains in my ribs. They checked my heart and for a PE and all was fine.

Moving forward from the birth into the first few years of motherhood, I experienced horrendous post-partum anxiety and struggled so much with my mental health. I never heard from the hospital again and did not receive any information moving forward on how to care

for myself after the trauma, both physically and mentally. I eventually saw a therapist who diagnosed me with PTSD as I was having flashbacks and horrible dreams of the birth, and suffering from chronic anxiety. Since the birth I experienced horrible bowel issues which resulted in me seeing a gastroenterologist, who also referred me to a womens health physio. The Womens health physio informed me of the extent of my tear and anal sphincter damage, and guided me on exercises to help build my internal muscles back for my pelvic floor.

Due to the issues with the muscles surrounding the bowel, I developed a bowel disease from chronic constipation and had to have a colonoscopy and endoscopy with the gastroenterologist to obtain answers. The cost of all of this on a one income family was horrendous, with therapists, specialists, surgery costs, recovery costs, naturopaths, physio etc. I still have to see the gastroenterologist and womens health physio, and take daily medication to help my bowels. I am unable to have a bowel movement without assistance from multiple medications daily that I have to purchase. I still have not been able to find what works best to have healthy bowel movements, currently working with gastroenterologists, GPs and naturopaths to find the best way to move forward.

Moving forward to my second childs birth, the hospital had not documented any tear and I had to bring it up with them when discussing 2nd birth options. Throughout the first few midwife appointments, they kept confirming with me that I had not had a tear and had only had an episiotomy. This was a really negative feeling to experience after all the work i had done with the psychologist and womens health physio to feel informed and accepting of my experience. I had a meeting with the head unit midwife who confirmed I had a misdocumented 3B tear and that it was highly recommended to have a caesarean. It was at this meeting with the head midwife that I had finally received some closure, this midwife was there for my first birth and acknowledged the hospitals errors and provided me with more information and guidance moving forward.

I requested for her to please put the tear on my file notes so that I did not have to voice my issues and repeat the traumatic story from the first birth. I had already been obtaining guidance from my womens health physio who assisted me with knowledge on the best way forward for my second birth, and I had a planned caesarean. My partner experienced some PTSD with my second sons birth, not realising he had held onto trauma from the first birth until the second birth occurred. My partner also experienced post partum depression after our second son. My second birth was a beautiful experience for me and I am very grateful for the guidance from my womens health physio in making me feel informed and empowered to make the right decision for me and my second son.