

Submission
No 464

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 11 August 2023

Partially
Confidential

To Whom it May Concern,

I am writing today to express my concern about the effects of birth trauma on mothers, families and our communities at large. The discussions at Mothers Groups I have attended speak of very high numbers of birth trauma and unsatisfactory postpartum care for healing mothers.

My daughter, now 4, came into this world in a very fast 5 hour active labour, unmedicated vaginal birth. The midwife care I received throughout my pregnancy and birth was incredible. My baby-to-be and myself were both given such wonderful antenatal care. My birth was empowering and I felt safe.

After the arrival of my daughter however, I was losing excess amounts of blood so it was recommended I opt for the medical placenta delivery to which I consented. After this, the bleeding did not stop so the midwife alerted the doctors who had to act quickly as I was haemorrhaging. The communication was clear from members of the medical team who introduced themselves and advised when they were hooking me up to IV and injecting me with medication. The doctor also had to invasively insert her fingers into my cervix to expel blood clots whilst pushing down and “massaging” my stomach and uterus externally. The pain was comparable to birth. Fortunately, my daughter was healthy and safe in my arms and the waves of love and relief I felt were enough to distract my mind in the moment. Aswell as trying to initiate her first feed with one arm as anytime I raised my right arm to snuggle her it would set off the IV drop alarm.

Once the haemorrhaging ceased, I was “debriefed” on the procedures I underwent and left to be with my baby and partner. I was not in a logical mind frame after the experience to digest all that had happened so I accepted the information I received in the moment. It was not until returning home with some time and space to process that I realised no one explained the medications I had been injected with and any possible side effects. It was not clearly communicated to me that I experienced severe PPH, and any extra precautions I should take in aftercare to recuperate not only from the birth but the excess blood loss. I was not given any contact information if I needed further clarification of my experience or to discuss it again with any member of staff. The moment I left the hospital, 24 hours after the birth of my daughter, the care shifted totally from me to that of my baby.

I am very pleased with all of the resource and care my daughter received. This is one area our medical system has gotten right. The aftercare for mothers however grossly falls short. The lack of care and postnatal depletion from my adverse birth experience was a huge contributing factor to the postnatal depression and anxiety I experienced and am only now really coming to terms with.

Our medical system offers all kinds of rehabilitation care to individuals post surgical procedures (for example knee replacement), but do not offer this to women post birth, let alone the major abdominal surgery for women who birth by cesarean. We deserve better. Debrief and counselling sessions by trained professionals, physiotherapy, osteopathy, cranio sacral are some examples of what we should receive at the bare minimum for several months after birth but more realistically a year. It is not enough that we are sent home to navigate a new phase of life in the midst of deep physical (and emotional) healing.

Thank you for this opportunity to share my voice among the many other submissions to bring to light the severity of this issue.