

Submission  
No 495

## INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

**Name:** Name suppressed

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Partially  
Confidential

To the Select Committee on Birth Trauma

I would like to share my personal experience of birth trauma with the committee and the causes and factors that contributed to my experience.

I gave birth at [REDACTED] Hospital in (year)

The birth of my child did not go as I expected. We chose to go with the continuity of care model as I have always dreamed of a no intervention water birth. We also had a student follow along.

During my pregnancy and during my postnatal care I was not listened to and dismissed and received disrespectful care .

There are a few particular instances that I'd like to highlight.

1. Around 35 weeks I started experiencing symptoms of low iron, and I was measuring on the larger side, (35 weeks measuring 38) so I was to have a growth ultrasound & see an OB at the clinic. My midwife had me attend an OB clinic where my she said to me 'be pushy and tell them what you want, because they won't want to give you an iron infusion if they can get away with it'

I left the appointment in tears, I felt dismissed, not listened to and not supported.

2. At 41+2 weeks I started having reduced movements so I called the birth suite to come in for a check over, being anxious my BP was slightly elevated so they wanted to keep me in overnight, I refused and thankfully my Continuity midwife was with me who advocated for me to go home & come back in the morning to have waters broken as my cervix was favourable and BP was only borderline.

At 41+3 weeks at 8am my waters were broken and IV syntocinon started. Within two hours of being on the IV infusion I was ready to give up, it was a gruelling posterior labour. I requested the epidural which failed 3 times, I was at around 8cm and I remember feeling shamed by my student midwife as I specifically said throughout the pregnancy I was wanting to avoid the cascade of intervention.

I was made to labour on my back, labour of course stalled, my cervix swelled (at this point I remember asking for a c section as I desperately wanted to avoid forceps and I was dismissed and said it won't get to that). My baby's heart rate was having accelerations, I was advised to start pushing before being 10cm dilated or having the urge to push. Push time 1hr45 mins of coached pushing, baby's head was bobbing with every push and going back in, call was made to get her out. Forceps, episiotomy. [REDACTED] was stuck, she had shoulder dystocia, so I was then told to hold my knees over my shoulders and they pushed down hard on my stomach while they got her out. Thankfully she was fine.

I scored a 3b perineal tear and was rushed to theatre, where I had a PPH.

3. After returning to the ward from theatre to have my 3b perineal tear operated on I was so nauseous, tired and unable to move my legs due to a dense block but still in pain. I returned to the ward around 1am where I was greeted by the rudest midwife I think I've ever experienced, she kicked my partner & mother out, who didn't even have a chance to help me set up for the night. Left [REDACTED] on my chest, (I still could hardly open my eyes at this moment) so I buzzed for help and was told by the midwife that 'I no longer have my own

midwife (referring to my continuity midwife) and that she's (the ward midwife) was busy with other women'

That first night was the worst night of my life, she also refused to give me pain relief as she said I wasn't to get constipated with my tear.

I spent 4 days in hospital with two blood transfusions and multiple rounds of antibiotics. This was so awful, really opened my eyes to how grateful I was to have my own continuity midwife the whole journey until this point. The midwives on the ward were BUSY, UNDERSTAFFED AND OVERWORKED.

The way I was treated left me so distraught and disheartened by my birth I didn't want to go back to the hospital even though I had regular OASIC appointments for my tear and ongoing pelvic health. I decided to go through my GP where I required an additional iron infusion, & saw a private physio. This has left me out of pocket substantially.

That first month I was so scared to be alone with my daughter that even if my partner was in the shower I would have panic attacks and flash back to first night in hospital. My partner is suffering from depression post the birth and doesn't remember the birth, he said he has blocked it out as it's too painful to relive.

I was offered birth debriefs through my midwives but they advised I wait a few months to let the dust settle. I really am scared for our next baby and unsure of which care provider to choose, I truly believe that this wouldn't be my story if I were listened to, that my midwife wasn't exhausted and stretched thin, that the obs weren't run of their feet, ratios save lives.

Although this obviously not the birth I had planned there were two parts of my care that were positive, the OB and emergency team in the room were so amazing and so kind and I was also able to give full consent and understood the situation and that it was too late at this point for a c section and baby needed to come out asap. I am thankful she is alive.

My Continuity midwife was with me the whole day, and she made it my space to birth, my playlist, my lights, etc.

I would like to recommend that changes be made to increase staff ratios so that staff are able to provide better care.