

Submission
No 497

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

Note

In March 2021 I gave birth at [REDACTED]. What was meant to be a happy event, meeting our baby became traumatic, it did not go as I had wanted.

In the lead up to to birth, during birth and after birth I was subject to many instances of disrespectful care including no option for any continuity of care due to a suspected sub septate uterus. There were no other complications yet I was continuously told my pregnancy was high risk, this meant I saw a different doctor every few weeks in the women's and infants clinic and had the same repeated conversations every time. i was never made to feel like anything more than a number. I had no opportunity to attend birthing classes due to covid restrictions and as such when I went into labour I had no idea what to do and had no one to call for support or advice. I called the labour ward at the hospital and just kept getting told to stay home as they were 'busy with actual births'.

I was in labour for 9 hours before I went to the hospital at 7pm at which point I was told I was 3cm and they would give me something to slow things down and send me home. I refused this. I was then told the midwives were too busy, I was left in a room alone with my husband for over 10 hours with intermittent check ins and internal exams from a midwife who barely spoke to either of us. I managed to get pain relief twice but was not spoken to. There was no offer of advice or things I could do to help move things along at any point. I sat in the room and cried because I felt so scared and alone and didn't understand what I should be doing or even if such a long labour was normal. At 5am a midwife came in and asked to do an internal exam which I agreed to and she broke my waters without my consent.

She told me i was 6cm and that things should start to move along now. By 10am i was exhausted and devastated. i did not plan to have an epidural but when asked if i would like one i agreed as i didn't know what else i could do. Within minutes of the epidural a doctor came in and told me i would 'need' a c section as things were not progressing. i cried and agreed. Noone seemed to care that i was upset, noone asked if i was ok, noone asked me anything. I was wheeled off to surgery, my son was born cleaned up and wrapped up and given to my husband. His face was held near mine for about a minute before my husband and son were taken away and i was told i would see them in a couple of hours. it took over 2 hours before i saw and held my baby.

The care i received post surgery was horrible. a nurse or midwife grabbed my breast and forced it into my sons mouth while i was trying to feed him. it was physically painful and i felt so violated. When i cried out in pain her response was 'breastfeeding hurts'. i was again left alone in my room, this time with a baby following a major surgery barely able to move. My stay in hospital following the birth was nothing short of isolating and demoralising.

I should have felt cared for and supported, I felt so scared, alone, confused, let down, terrified and violated.

Birth trauma has impacted my physical body, mental health, bond with my baby and trust in the health system.

i suffered sever Post natal depression which resulted in a mild case of psychosis and it took me months of counselling and tike to feel like i even loved my son. I felt like i wasn't even in my own body for almost a year post birth.

Almost 3 years later and i still feel so hurt and angry and let down. so much was taken from away from me as a woman and as a first tike mother. So much i can never get back.

If I could change one thing to prevent birth trauma and improve care it would be to fund private midwifery and move birth away from hospitals. Open up continuity of care options for high risk women. Birthing women need more support, not intervention.