

Submission
No 480

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

I had my first son in [REDACTED] private January 2019. My pregnancy care prior to this was amazing and I was lucky to have a fairly easy pregnancy.

My waters broke so I went into hospital, they checked and decided as I was full term even though my body wasn't doing much it was important to pop me onto the Pitocin drip.

They felt his head and realised he was back to back so said I needed good strong contractions to get him to flip/come out properly. Going from nothing to wild on-top of each other contractions meant I asked very quickly for an epidural. (This was not how I wanted to approach birth but the pain was way too intense, I went on to have my second son without needing this intervention until near the end as I wasn't induced.)

I had known that risk re induction but in that room in that moment not being medically trained you don't feel you can question the doctor. So after around 12 hours being pumped with Pitocin and having an epidural it is almost go time. I have been on my back the whole time and part way through they scan him and say he has a bit of a swollen head but let's just see what happens. I asked if a cesarean would be better and stated I was happy for that if needed.

I get to pushing and I push for awhile but nothing seems to happen they then suggest using a vaccum to get bub out. Feeling like there is no other way I say yes and it happens. At first it feels like it's working and bub moves well then his head comes out and I now know he had shoulder distocia and I hear a horrendous sound but also feel relief bub is out. I had a fourth degree tear and the doctors face said it all but he then quietly and somewhat frantically starts to stitch me up.

The tear was bad enough but then post bub I had a catheter which my bladder spasmed and leaked around. Due to the tear I was not mobile/everytime I moved I made a mess and had to take the catheter with me it was horrible. Due to my inability to move I passed as baseball sized clot. This had caused me to feel back and stomach cramps which they thought was my bladder. They upped my catheter size 4 times and recatherterised me 5 times even with me begging them to stop or wheel me across to the [REDACTED]. I ended up after the 3rd being told about the fourth crying and saying wheel me over or call a urologist this is ridiculous. After the 5th catheter a urologist from the [REDACTED] came to see me and said pretty much there was nothing wrong and there was no need to be recatherterised.

My son's birth was nothing I wanted, I didn't feel like I could speak or in the moment was made fully aware or given options. I know my situation is rare but the part for me was the post birth it tipped it over into being way more traumatic. Instead of healing resting and trying to deal with the injury I had sustained I was then also battling to be heard to stop the pain and trauma that was continuing. I have continence issues now that will need to be surgically fixed once I'm finished having kids. But it isn't a do it once and you are fine I will likely need it every 10 years. I couldn't talk to anyone about birth or hear about it for a few years after my son was born. I saw my psychologist monthly and sometimes fortnightly for years post his birth and honestly only just before my seconds son's birth 3 years after the first did I feel I was doing ok. I had to have my incontinence tested and had a full physical PTSD response to being recatherterised.

Birth trauma has lasting impacts and I am just lucky I had the resources and the support system to help me. Even then I found bonding with my child and my mental health a real struggle. I was moderately to severely depressed for at least 1-1 and a half years post his birth. I will need surgery which costs money I needed physio, mental health appointments doctors

appointments. And honestly my only saving grace is my amazing obstetrician (who unfortunately wasn't there for my first son's birth) talked through what I needed talked through and was honest with how horrible my experience has been.

I had a premie bub for my second and the special care nursery experience was tough but even that was nothing compared to the fallout from my first son's birth.

Please consider funding more post birth care for women, having doula like workers/social workers/a policy where women in labour have someone helping them navigate issues they don't always have all the knowledge of.

We shouldn't have to beg to be heard.

Thankyou for your time.