

Submission
No 482

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 10 August 2023

Partially
Confidential

In September 2019 I gave birth at the [REDACTED] Hospital [REDACTED].

What was meant to be a positive and empowering life event ended up being traumatic and did not go as I wanted.

During birth, I was subject to instances of coercion, disrespectful care and physical violence.

One of the worst moments for me was when I was coerced into an internal vaginal examination so the midwife could see how far along I was, after finally agreeing to an examination, I told the midwife I only gave permission for an examination and did not agree to a membrane sweep or breaking of my waters. During the examination my midwife performed a sweep - going against my wishes and without my consent. Not only did I feel betrayed, it made me physically sick. I vomited from the pain. The midwife did not apologise, but left the room when I got upset that she performed a procedure without my consent. At this time when I should have felt cared for and supported, I felt so violated.

During the 2nd phase of labour when I was pushing my contractions stalled, I was coerced into receiving syntocin to bring on my contractions to speed up the pushing phase. I did not want any medication and wanted a natural birth. I was told if I didn't have this, I would have to have a C-section. So I agreed. I was not given any other options. I was told that I had to push the baby out within 1 hour or they would be booking in a C-section. The syntocin didn't really work, and my body didn't feel like pushing. I was coached to push and given a time frame to do it in. I was forced to lie on my back with my legs up. The midwives kept threatening me that the Obgyn would come in and use forceps or a vacuum if we couldn't deliver the baby quickly. At one point the obgyn came in and did an internal examination on me without my consent - he twisted his whole hand inside me to see the position of the baby. It was excruciating. I was crying saying no. My husband finally said enough is enough she is saying NO. I finally gave birth lying on my back after 3 hours of pushing in a bright room full of people.

Not once during this time did my daughter's heart rate change, she was not distressed. I don't know why I wasn't allowed to take my time and birth her, the hospital policy of only allowing the 2nd stage of labour to be 2 hours severely impacted my birth experience in a negative way. I should have been allowed time to birth naturally in an undisturbed environment without any external time pressure, disrespect, coercion, and physical violence.

After I gave birth to my daughter, I was injected with syntocin without asking for my consent or explaining what they were doing, they just injected my leg. My birth plan was to deliver my placenta naturally. This was not even an option or discussion.

I was made to feel like I was lucky that I had a vaginal delivery and not a c-section, and that the midwives were the heroes at helping me by allowing me a little bit of extra time so they didn't have to use the forceps or vacuum.

This birth trauma impacted my bond with my baby in the initial postpartum period. It affected my trust in the health system and my willingness to have another baby.