

Submission
No 521

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

My name is [REDACTED], I am 36 years old from Sydney NSW. My children are aged 4, 4 and 2.

I would like to speak about the birth trauma I experienced during my pregnancy and delivery of my twins.

The merger of [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] Hospital was a bit of a shambles. I was often made to wait 2 hours at [REDACTED] Hospital for my scheduled appointment, often needing to take a whole day off for ante natal visits. It got worse when the merger eventually happened, and I had to wait close to three hours for my appointments. I hope this has been fixed now, but it has since put me off the public system and opted for a private obstetrician for my 2nd pregnancy.

Every antenatal visit at [REDACTED] Hospital involved a new doctor who had no idea what my background was, and it felt like each appointment was just repeating itself. One doctor started off with having breakfast at his desk while he read through my file which I found highly unprofessional and to add to it when I advised that I was planning on delivering vaginally he then told me that there's a high risk of cerebral palsy if I choose to go vaginally. This put me in a panic, but after some time, it just made me angry because while he thought he was being informative, I just thought it was unnecessary considering the number of vaginal births that occur with no issues. It was as if he was trying to scare me into having a c-section. Part of me feels like doctors will push for c-section as they're more predictable and can help with scheduling of births and, therefore, not in the best interests of their patients. Why would all my previous doctors tell me that if both babies were cephalic that it would be good to try for vaginal if there was such a big risk in causing cerebral palsy?!

I went into labour spontaneously at 36+4 weeks and went to the hospital at 430am upon the advice of one of the registrars. we waited in the observation room for about 3 hours before anyone came to see me. A midwife places monitors on my belly, and after an hour of waiting, he said there was no uterine activity being picked up by the monitors.

A doctor came in to advise that they wanted to send me home as it doesn't appear that I was in labour despite me feeling my contractions come every 2 minutes with barely a break in between. My husband really didn't want to take me home just in case something happened. The head obstetrician on duty that day then came to see me to say that he will let me stay in the wards so they can keep an eye on me but if I do go into labour then it would be best to go for c-section in case baby number 2 becomes distressed. Again.. the mention of pushing a c-section! He said it was because the day prior they had to deliver twins and they couldn't get an emergency c-section team together quick enough. I then asked the previous doctor if I really needed to go for csection and he said no and that the head OB was new and had no idea how the systems worked and that they could definitely get a team together if it comes to it.

It was now midday and the staff was meant to organise a room for me in the wards but noone had come to see me for a few hours again. The midwives had a change over and the new one taking care of me was absolutely wonderful and listened to me so well. I asked if she can check again because the contractions were coming one over the other non stop and I was in constant pain. after 15 mins of monitoring she said there was definitely something happening and promptly moved us to a delivery suite. I was trying all I could to withstand the pain but it just kept coming. My husband went out to call the midwife asking if I can have medications but she said she will need to check with the doctor who is now MIA. She then decided to come in to see me and asked if she can do a pelvic exam to which she found I was 8cm dilated. She quickly found a doctor who confirmed this and swiftly arranged for an epidural which was something I had planned for.

Epidural in and I had reached 10cm within the hour. I begun pushing but after 40 minutes the head OB on duty showed up to check on me. I could see the midwives feeling annoyed with his presence and he told them he will give me another 20 minutes before he intervened. Why was I on a timer?! thinking back, it really was frustrating to feel like I had a time limit being in the room especially since both baby's heart rates weren't showing any sign of stress.

At exactly 8pm he comes back into the room, not even dressed in scrubs and ready to take over. He performed 2 attempts with the ventouse that failed. Then he proceeded to make an episiotomy. I only found out recently that I need to give consent for that, and he actually never asked me. The episiotomy cause my blood to pool on the floor and covered the white clothing of the OB. There was so much blood that my husband felt faint and needed to leave the room. Baby number 1 was born via forceps and was quickly taken away from me so I can deliver number 2. 29 minutes of pushing with 2 and 1/2 attempts at ventouse and baby number 2 arrived. My ob actually congratulated me for delivering twins vaginally because he hasn't delivered twins this way in such a long time. How is this possible?! Does this mean he pushes all twin patients to having a csection even when it is considered safe particularly in situations similar to mine? he is supposedly one of the best obstetricians on the [REDACTED] [REDACTED] so it surprised me when he said that.

I had a quick cuddle with baby number 2 before things started to get hazy and felt like I was losing consciousness. there were a team of people working on me, and for the most part It was all a blur. I know there were 2 doctors stitching me up and a few nurses around me, but I definitely drifted in and out of consciousness. I hardly even saw my husband before he had to leave. I had lost 1.8L of blood.

My babies were sent to special care nursery for the night and I slept in the delivery room until the morning.

The babies spent 4 nights in Special care and when it was time to room in I wasn't given any assistance with breast feeding. i didnt even see a lactation consultant until day 5. However, the evening of day 5 arrived and I got a midwife come see me at midwife. she had heard that

I was trying to establish breastfeeding but I was having trouble getting one baby to latch. She said to me that I need to keep trying because "Its no good having one baby on the bottle and one on the breast". That statement shocked me because it was incredibly biased and more so her own opinion and not taking into consideration how her words can affect people. Especially brand new mothers. Why can't it be both? Why one or the other?!

So despite my tiredness, I gave it a go. 5 minutes of my baby screaming at my breast not being able to latch she told me to try again another time because again "Its not good to have one on the breast and one on the bottle". i snapped back at her saying "maybe its my choice!" then ran to cry. I've heard some really horrible stories of midwives who provide such unsupportive comments to women regarding breastfeeding and comments like these are just uneducated and rude.

In my 2nd pregnancy, I was told that I had developed anti-c antibodies in my blood. from my research and the advice from my private ob was that it could happen from 2 things - a blood transfusion or in the previous pregnancy my blood mixing with one of the babies. given that I had lost 1.8L of blood, he believed I would have received a transfusion as I was well beyond the threshold to receive one. I looked through all my records, but nothing seemed to point to a transfusion. I wanted to request an enquiry into my delivery, but I wasn't sure how to approach it. From the way my delivery was handled and the mess that was [REDACTED] Hospital at the time, there's a part of me that feels like there were a lot of corners cut and maybe a transfusion was delivered during the time that I was only semi conscious. Especially since my youngest ended up having hemolytic disease of an infant at birth and spent 4 days in NICU. And while blood mixing could have happened, all I can think was something had been mishandled during my twin delivery and now my baby is in NICU and all future pregnancies will be very high risk.