

Submission  
No 533

## INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

**Name:** Name suppressed

**Date Received:** 9 August 2023

---

Partially  
Confidential

I became pregnant with my son in 2021, and opted for shared care through [REDACTED] Hospital. Due to my age at the time of pregnancy (35), coupled with reduced fetal movements in late pregnancy, I was induced at 40+5, even though my cervix was still high and closed, and my baby's head was not engaged.

As the midwives failed to apprise me of both the process, and potential complications of induction (beyond a double-sided A4 handout which sketched the various forms of induction in the vaguest of terms) I was completely blindsided by the procedure and its aftermath. The first drip infusion - which was exceedingly painful - failed, necessitating a second drip. The second drip left me shaking uncontrollably and caused my baby's heart rate to drop. By the time his heart rate stabilised, I was experiencing irregular contractions and was transferred to a birthing suite, although I was only a few centimetres dilated and my baby's head still was not engaged. I was given gas for pain relief and sat in the shower, where my labour quickly progressed. Although I began feeling the urge to push, the midwife did not believe that I could be in active labour, as it had been less than an hour since I was last checked and found to be minimally dilated.

My husband had to forcefully insist that I was checked, whereupon it was discovered that I had progressed to 7cm. As the midwife tried to organise an epidural, my baby's heart rate began to drop again, while I dilated even further. Doctors and nurses came rushing into the room and a medical consent form was thrust in front of me as I was told that I was going to be having an emergency caesarean. I was so whacked out from the gas that I could not comprehend what the document was saying; the only thing I knew is that I was terrified for my baby. My husband had to sign on my behalf as I was completely incapacitated. Luckily for all of us, my baby's head engaged after I was wheeled into the operating theatre, and he was delivered via forceps instead. He spent the first night of his life in a heated crib, while I tried to reconcile the shock of his birth. The delivering doctor debriefed me on the events of my son's birth several days later, but as I was still processing what had happened, and as the debrief happened at 11pm without my husband present, I didn't get any of the questions answered that occurred to me to ask later.

When my son and I were released from the hospital, I experienced flashbacks to the birthing suite every time I took a shower; this persisted for several months afterwards. My husband was similarly traumatised by the birthing experience, especially as he wasn't able to directly participate in any of the medical appointments of the pregnancy due to Covid restrictions. I always thought I wanted two children, but the trauma of my son's birth has completely eradicated any desire to go through another pregnancy.

I would like to acknowledge the respect and applaud the care and professionalism of the medical team caring for me and my son during the birthing process. They were, for the most part, truly wonderful, even if the birth was not.