

Submission  
No 534

## INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

**Name:** Name suppressed

**Date Received:** 9 August 2023

---

Partially  
Confidential

My first labour I request an epidural only for three attempts to be made with the third resulting in a Dural puncture. No ultrasound guidance was used despite the first two failed attempts. The Anesthetics dr continues to comment "you should be easy to place an epidural in you are thin"

I went on to have a severe post puncture headache. I required two epidural blood patches the first includes one failed attempt and a successful second attempt. Despite crying out in pain when the consultant failed the first attempt no ultrasound guidance was considered. All 20mls of the blood was administered with no pressure felt in my head. The consultant told me this was not normal and suggested a severe leak and he thought I would require a further blood patch. Again comments around how easy it should be for them to find my spinal anatomy and that I am deceptively difficult to place an epidural in.

I went on to experience another headache and another patch was considered. I remember crying as they wheeled me to theatre (by this point I had had 5 needles places into my spine in 5 days. I was met by a new anesthetist who was prideful and would not listen to me when I said how difficult my previous attempts had been. He laughed and said don't worry you will be easy. I immediately said no please take me back to the ward in tears I went home facing the reality of not being able to stand for more than 2ins as I tried to look after my new baby as a first time mum . The pain was awful and I felt like someone was pulling my brain out of my head.

24 hrs later the hearing issues started. I felt like I was underwater bit the sounds were very harsh. My right sides hearing was effected. I did my research and found a number of research articles studying the incidence of hearing loss with Dural puncture. I called through to the Anesthetics team as advised previously to do so if I needed to. The call was answered by a junior dr who told me my hearing issues could not be related I clearly told her to put the consultant on the phone I had done my research this was a thing that was related. The consult was fantastic I cannot more highly praise him, he agreed with me told me to come back to maternity. He went and researched the management and incidences of hearing loss. He told me he has only encountered one other women with the issue of hearing loss, she did not get proper hearing back for 6 months. He however suggested that It was worth trying another blood patch despite limited research showing benefit with hearing loss it was worth a try rather than live with hearing loss for a long time. He gave me time to consider my options and I was taken to theatre

This time my blood patch was a completely different experience, the consultant read my other notes to locate to previous epidural attempts, used an ultrasound and gave me gass and air to calm me throughout the procedure. One attempt was all it took this time. He comment how he was surprised no one had tried an ultrasound earlier. I was given clear instructions to never let anyone but a consultant attempt any spinal needles on my spine again and allways insist on ultrasound.

My story I think shows the importance of the multidisciplinary team in birth and that birth trauma can come from any member of that team. I was so scared of an epidural again, scared going into birth and having these experiences again if I needed an epidural.

I cannot fault the care I was given by my midwives and obstetricians.