

Submission
No 541

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 9 August 2023

Partially
Confidential

Submission regarding birth experience and trauma:

In August 2020, I gave birth to my first child, my son via "emergency caesarean". My OB at the time, [REDACTED], had maintained from my first appointment that because I was short and had small feet, that I had a small pelvis and I could not birth a baby naturally. This should have been a red flag, but I didn't know better.

I told her that I wanted a natural birth, and she told me that she would allow me to "try" for one.

I trusted her.

She induced me on 7 August 2020 at 39 weeks pregnant, because she was going on holiday the following week. She went so far as to tell me that the statistics show that it is safer to be induced at 39 weeks than to go into labour at 40 weeks, and that the outcome (whether csection or natural birth) is unaffected by induction. I now know this was a lie - she was quoting the ARRIVE trial which has since been discredited several times.

[REDACTED] induced me on Thursday morning using the tape. She then broke my waters and hooked me up to syntocinon on Friday morning. They also gave me the Epidural (at my request), and I believe I may have had an allergic reaction because I was extremely lethargic and unable to keep my eyes open. Approximately 4 hours later, after I had progressed "just 1cm more to 3cm", [REDACTED] called a failure to progress and wheeled me to theatre. Her exact words were "it's time to call it quits - I could let you labour longer, but you're just going to labour for 40 hours and end up with an emergency caesarean anyway". She gave me the consent form and I signed it - I was not at all mentally present. Baby was fine, I was fine. [REDACTED] had places to be. There was no discussion about options, there was no explanation from her as to what was about to happen or why, there was no question to be answered by me about my body or baby, there was no permission sought by her - she had made the decision for me. There was no consent given by me, let alone informed consent.

I believed immediately (that night) that my caesarean section was medically unnecessary, and over the course of 2 years I began to learn that it was brought on by the actions of [REDACTED] who had set me up to fail. I grieved for a long time. I felt robbed of my initiation into motherhood, I felt hijacked and misled. I felt betrayed.

I maintain that she acted unethically (giving me information that supported only her agenda, and not information that allowed me to make an informed decision), while she argues she acted on her judgment and expertise, having only the baby's well being in mind.

About 10 months after my son's birth, I consulted with another OB who obtained my hospital notes and confirmed the following to me:

1. [REDACTED] called the csection before I was in active labour.
2. [REDACTED] had identified the csection as an elective csection on the report - despite leading me and the hospital to believe it was an emergency csection.
3. It is extremely unusual to call a failure to progress before 15 hours.

I wrote [REDACTED] a letter and I told her how I felt, the consequences of her actions, and pulled her up on her unethical behaviour. She of course defended herself in response.

After this experience, I educated myself and surrounded myself with the right people and had my VBAC on 4 December 2022 with the birth of my daughter. I was supported by another OB who is pro VBACs, and my doula [REDACTED].

It was the most beautiful, empowering and enlightening experience of my entire life and I am so thankful for it.

I believe the coercion I experienced with [REDACTED] is sadly the norm for private OBs, and it truly breaks my heart. If women were left to labour and birth as God and nature intended, things would be so very different. Women are losing their voices and autonomy and decisions are being made for and about them, without their input. I want to do what I can to make sure that this behaviour is outlawed.