

Submission
No 573

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

In 2020 I had my daughter. I went with a private OB and through the private health system, believing this was the right choice for myself and my family. I had a pretty easy pregnancy, no risks or issues were identified. I did have low iron but this was managed with supplements. At my growth scan (around 30ish weeks) the sonographer and my OB advised that the baby was measuring on the larger side (they didn't specify want size or how many weeks ahead).

At 34 weeks I was advised to complete another growth scan. This identified that I had some fluid but nothing of concern and that baby again was measuring on the larger side. At my 37 week check up, the OB advised that the baby was measuring big and to avoid complications we should discuss induction options. She then also requested that a cervical examination be conducted at this same appointment. She advised that the cervix was long and closed- basically not even showing signs of softening yet. I asked her why we should do the induction and she said because baby is going to keep getting bigger and it poses potential risks. I was not educated on birth and my options at this time being a first time mum, you just went with what the doctor advises. So I agreed to the induction, she didn't really walk me through the procedure or what the risks were but gave me some information sheets to read and then ask her any questions if I had any.

At 38 weeks, I was booked in to have an induction and I had all the interventions. This included, a pessary, my waters were broken the following morning as the pessary started some contractions but not enough. I had another cervical exam and was only 1-2cm dilated. I was then hooked up to Syntocinon which is the synthetic form of oxytocin to quick start my labour. I felt like I had all of these things happen to me without me being able to voice any concerns or ask questions or alternative options. It was not enjoyable and as a first time mother was very stressful.

Through this whole period as well, it was in the middle of COVID lockdowns so I had to remain in the hospital overnight, I wasn't able to leave with the pessary (I believe this is also [REDACTED] Private's protocol). It was quite isolating.

The syntocinon started to progress my labour but I opted for early pain relief because the pain was very intense and after a few hours I couldn't keep going. My labouring started to slow down (as it normally does when you have an epidural) and when I was checked for dilation I was 10cm and ready to push. I couldn't feel anything (obviously the point of the epidural, however at no point did they discuss if I wanted to reduce the pain relief slightly and/or the syntocinon). Due to also not being able to feel anything and being constricted to the bed and on my back, I had to have an episiotomy and my daughter required the vacuum to be utilised to assist in pulling her out.

When she came out, she was in shock, wasn't screaming or breathing well and had the cord wrapped around her. She rated low on the APGAR scale and was immediately taken away from me with the cord cut and oxygen put on her. I was also told later by a midwife in the room at the time that when the cord was cut it wasn't clamped straight away and my daughter lost a bit of blood. She was taken away to the special care nursery and remained there for 3 days. She had low blood sugars and was tube fed for the first two days.

Key issues that impacted the trauma during birth for me included the following:

- being induced due to having a big baby. my daughter was 3.2kg at 38 weeks, even if she was born at 40 weeks, she wasn't on the larger scale at all so I don't actually see what the risk was here
- I had every intervention during my birth without any of the risks explained to me during this time. I also wasn't provided with an option to discuss alternatives to try prior to these
- I had a cervical exam at 37 weeks which was completely unnecessary and very painful
- throughout my labour I had minimal support from midwives, except for one who was amazing but due to a shift change had to leave
- when my daughter was taken away from to provide her with oxygen, at no point was there any opportunity for me to have skin on skin with her or try to feed her

-I felt like I was not within the room or my body through the whole experience (and not in a good way) it was like everything was happening to me and I had no choice in what was happening with my body.

-I felt this also impacted my postpartum journey and bonding experience with my child.

I am currently pregnant and due to give birth at the end of September. I have gone with another private OB again, someone who is more on board with understanding a women's choice and I have also hired a doula to be present and support me during my birth journey.

The birth system needs to change, we need to provide more up to date data, analysis and information out there especially for first time mother's so they can plan better and make more informed decisions.