

Submission
No 606

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

I fell pregnant in March 2021 with my first baby and what should have been a beautiful experience for my husband and I was shaped negatively due to the incompetence of staff at [REDACTED] Hospital and the Covid protocols. I was subjected to horrible treatment from quite a few staff members including the people at the door of the hospital due to a personal decision of not receiving the Covid vaccination. I had contacted the hospital liaison officer to enquire about the rules at the time that I would be giving birth (Dec 2021). She was appalled at the treatment I had received from the staff at the doors and unfortunately I was not the first to experience similar treatment. Upon contacting her, I asked about the current rules. We were told due to my husband and I both being Covid-19 unvaccinated that he would have to wait in the waiting room (as per the normal requirement) until I had been assessed and taken to the birthing unit and we would both need a PCR test when we got in.

I was told he could be with me provided we both returned a negative PCR. On the day I went into labour (29th December 21), we went to the hospital around midnight where my husband was told to stand outside because he was not vaccinated. When we questioned this, we were dismissed. This caused me to become quite stressed and emotional while in labour. I was wheeled up to be assessed and PCR tested, and told I was 3cm dilated and taken to the birthing suite. My husband was all of a sudden allowed in the hospital, with him coming to my side immediately to comfort me. He was witnessing me in labour for the first time ever and did not think to remind the midwives to PCR test him (none had questioned him or prompted him to have done). He sat in the birthing suite with me for approximately 12-15 hours where I was not supported well by the first midwives. My waters had broken at home while I was on the toilet. I was told that due to the colour of the liquid that was on the towel as I sat on a towel in the shower, my baby was most likely in distress.

I was confined to the bed and told monitoring needed to happen to where they attached a monitor to the babies head. While I was dealing with labour which involved me rocking to handle the pain as it was unbearable just laying on my back, I had accidentally pulled the monitor out. The midwife came in and scolded me and said I can't move otherwise I will pull that out again. Another rude midwife came in when I was in a lot of pain and not dealing well and in a condescending tone suggested an epidural which I declined. A little later, her shift ended and I had a wonderful midwife come in who had not long started. She allowed me to get on all fours on the floor and supported me in breathing. She also supported my husband in things he could do to help. I laboured with her for the majority of the 14ish hour period. In the process, I had drs coming in wanting to do a cervix check and were clearly in a rush as one left me with blood running down my legs.

At the sight of the blood, I became very nervous and the midwife reassured me that it is all okay. I had progressed to 9cm but was stuck here for about 5-6 hours. The dr also expressed concern as it appeared something was wrong with my liver and tests indicated an infection. I was put on an inducing drip and given a 2 hour window to see an improvement or we could go straight to an emergency Caesarian. When the inducing drip did not work, we opted for the emergency Caesarian. I signed the paperwork and was ready to go in (just outside theatre) when a surgeon asked my husband if he had been tested and he replied no. It was all panic stations as they then did not want him there. This obviously stressed me out beyond belief.

We were given three choices. We could go into the Covid positive ward but someone was in there and why subject my newborn baby to something that we didn't have to? (We we're not displaying any symptoms and I'd already tested negative). My husband had tested negative I think 1 or 2 days before at work. The second option was for him to be tested and wait before we do anything (this was before RAT and at this stage, PCR tests outside the hospital were taking at least four days) or I could go in without him. We didn't really have much of a choice with these options and we opted for me to go in alone. I was distraught, my husband also stressed out was taken back to the birthing room to wait where the nice midwife had agreed to take the baby to him while I was in recovery.

I have never felt so alone and scared to go through something so major and my husband taken away from me. He missed the birth of our son due to this. All went well with the surgery, I had a cuddle while on the operating table and my son was taken to my husband to do skin to skin. I was taken to recovery and after coming out of recovery, I was wheeled to the maternity ward. My son wheeled in after me, my husband and midwife walked in behind my son and my husband was told to leave immediately because he was putting the other woman in the room at risk. How ridiculous that he could be in one part of the hospital for fifteen or so hours but not allowed to be there to support his wife who had just had major surgery and newborn son. I did not have my bag as of yet, they would not let my husband bring me my bag. In addition to this, there were usually six midwives on for this size floor and there were three on that day but one had been taken down to emergency because she had a stroke.

Two midwives to cover an entire ward and without the support of my husband or even my bag! My son was crying and I couldn't even help him, all I could do was ring the buzzer and wait as long as it needed as I was still numb from surgery. My husband dropped my bag to my sister to drop into me but when she brought it to the hospital door, she was told I'd had my one visitor for the day and she could leave the bag and when they got around to it, they'd take it up. My sister questioned whether they had extra staff on to support me as a first time mother who's husband had just been kicked out which we already know the answer to that question. I spent three nights and my husband faced awful discrimination around the fact that he was not vaccinated. One day, having to wear a mask, as well as the plastic protective gear over his face. Luckily, there were some lovely staff who helped us but our overall experience was not positive and I am now due to have my next baby in December this year. Going through the process again has truded a lot of trauma up and I am still struggling twenty months later.