

Submission
No 613

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

I gave birth in 2021.

I had a stretch and sweep performed without my consent, when I was having an exam to see how dilated I was. I went in to have an induction, beginning with an examination to see how dilated I was, but was informed I was too dilated for the induction and I would go into labour soon and was sent back to the ward. I was confused so I kept asking questions about why she thought I would go into labour soon. The nurse performing the examination was getting more annoyed at my questions then said she had 'rattled everything around when she was in there'. I clarified if she meant a stretch and sweep and she said 'sure' and walked out.

The next day I was induced using syntosin, despite months of conversations around wanted to at least wait until my due date. I am high risk due to heart condition I was born with, however had a great pregnancy with no complications. I laboured for 12 hours with no further dilation until they told me I need to take an epidural because they need to turn up the drug and it would help me relax. When they turned up the drug my son's heart rate dropped and wouldn't stabilise. I was rushed into emergency c-section.

After an emergency c section they sent my child and husband out of the room and wouldn't tell me where they had gone. When I started vomiting (because someone gave me salt water accidentally) they told me I was wrong and said I must be getting sick. I started getting a fever, which I found out later is quite common after birth, even more so if separated from your baby and father of your child. They took bloods from me and my child and neither of us had an infection, but still gave us antibiotics 'just in case'.

The day after I gave birth I was in the cardiac ward with my child and partner (who I had been told was allowed to stay with us). I have a heart condition and they wanted to keep me for observation. My partner had fallen asleep for the first time in over 40 hrs and I sat up with my baby, first quiet moment I had with him since giving birth 24 hours previously. A nurse came in twice to tell me that my partner had to go home and that it was better for both of us if he left. My left arm wasn't working, the midwife who had no idea what she was talking about told me they must have nicked something when they cut me open. I couldn't hold my child unassisted but the nurse demanding my husband leave left alone with my baby, unable to get up out of the seat (due to c section) or pick up my child off my lap. I had a panic attack trying to wake my partner up from the other side of the room and not drop my newborn off my lap. Luckily I was hooked up to blood pressure monitors that started setting off alarms. I was a cardiac patient who had just had a horrible, scary birth less than 24 hours ago, I had almost lost my child due to the interventional birth the hospital forced upon me and was now being told my only support had to leave. The room became full of people responding to the alarm and my husband furious at their treatment towards me when he was asleep. The nurse eventually was overruled and my husband made him apologise to me.

Two nights later I was alone in the maternity ward. My milk still hadn't fully come through so I was getting up a lot to feed my child. I was deeply traumatized by the whole experience and

the overwhelm of breastfeeding on my own. I was crying a lot. The nurse that found me insisted I give her my baby so I could sleep. I politely refused to give her my child, knowing that the oxytocin release with feeding and skin to skin was best for both of us, and lessen my likelihood of postnatal depression. She said well I can't help you and left me alone, crying and struggling. Later in the night I got up again to feed my child and got him back to sleep in the wheely crib when I needed to go bathroom. I didn't want to bring him in the toilet because the lights were too bright and would wake him up. I asked the nurse at the desk to just watch him because he's just gone to sleep, and a minute later I came out with her holding my sleeping baby, again telling me I need to leave him with her. He hadn't made a noise or I would have heard it from the toilet.

Respect the family unit and the fathers role in caring for their children and partners. Let them stay in the hospital. Respect the connection between mother and child and don't retract support if she doesn't want to give up her child. Inform the mother at all stages what you are doing to her body, her child and trust her.