

Submission
No 616

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

My personal traumatic birth experience.

My waters broke on my estimated due date. The start of my journey as a first time mum. My husband and I made our way to our local public hospital, as per our birth plan.

We spent around 24 hours in the labour ward, but my contractions were minimal so we were sent home as were advised to come back when the contractions intensified.

Back at home, the contractions increased and with each contraction I was vomiting. I'm unsure of the time lapsed between time spent at home and returning to the hospital.

When I returned to the hospital I was induced to speed up contractions. I had been determined to experience a natural birth. There was spotting of blood. A midwife offered to help with the pain by manipulating my hips mid-contraction at one point. It was excruciating.

At the 48 hour mark, the head paediatric nurse phoned the hospital to learn of the outcome of my delivery. They were advised that I had not yet delivered my baby. The nurse returned to the hospital and after some monitoring and review, advised me that I would need to have an emergency caesarean as my baby's heart rate had been dropping for the past 3 hours and they would likely be born with heart failure. This was around the 50hr mark.

In the ER room, one of the surgical staff accidentally cut themselves with a scalpel (however this was not mentioned to me at the time). Thankfully, my son was delivered safely. Apparently, I lost quite an amount of blood on the operating table, requiring numerous transfusions. As a result, my body went into shock and I began convulsing on the operating table and I was placed under general anaesthetic.

I remained in hospital for around five days post delivery. I felt confused and disconnected from myself for much of the time, and little was done to help me feel connected with my new baby. There was no assistance to help breastfeed and my son missed out on vital skin to skin moments as I was unconscious for some time after his birth. - I will never get that moment back.

When I was released from hospital, a nurse told me I should start to exercise to "recover my figure". Furthermore, I had a special visit from the NUM, requesting that I signed a waiver to say I would not sue the hospital following my experience. I did not feel well enough to return home at the time, but feeling embarrassed? Unsure of myself? Belittled? I signed, so I could go home and be with my new family. I was shivering and cold, though it was March and it had been unseasonably cold that year.

At home with my new baby. The wound from the caesarean was very painful. I couldn't sit or lay down comfortably. My husband has to raise the mattress with cushions because I could not bare to bend my body. Because I was in so much pain, I could feel myself beginning to resent my baby, and I still feel so much guilt for having those feelings. I didn't raise any concern with the hospital as I felt silly at the time, and assumed this was the normal level of pain post birth.

Approximately 5 days after returning home, I went to the bathroom and my caesarean wound burst open. It was full of puss. We went straight back to the hospital, where I was placed on intravenous antibiotics immediately.

I was visited in the ER by one of the surgeons who assisted during the labour. She cried and gave me a hug. Turns out I had a staff infection. I remained in hospital for another 7 days for monitoring. During this time, I was left mostly alone. I wasn't able to try and breastfeed because the antibiotics I was on were too strong. So I had no choice but to introduce my little boy to formula. One nurse showed me where the kitchen was so I could make the bottles myself.

It was a horrible experience.

Fast forward close to 12 years and I am fortunate to have a happy and healthy boy. He is diagnosed Autistic and ADHD, and I can't help but wonder if his birthing experience attributed to his functioning and diagnosis?

All I hope is that he knows how much I love and adore him and that I can be forgiven for the l'll thoughts I had toward him in his most vulnerable early days of life.