

Submission
No 618

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

On the night 20th of October, 2022, my hind waters began leaking in the bathtub, without my knowledge. At 3am the next morning, I stretched in bed and felt a small gush of water. 45 minutes later I had another small gush and my partner and I proceeded to the hospital, after speaking with one of the MGP midwives on the phone. Upon arriving, I was placed under the care of the midwives who were on birth suits for that shift and I consented to a speculum examination to see if I had lost my waters. I thought a midwife would perform this however they gave the speculum to a student, without asking me if I was okay with the student performing this examination, and she proceeded with the tension up so high that I yelled out in pain and was sore for the hours following this.

The results were that it was my amniotic fluid, however I was not told that it was a hind water leak, or what that actually meant, and was encouraged to get induced. Later that night, after being induced 5 hours prior, I opted for an epidural. The anaesthetist came into the room around midnight and after almost 3 hours of trying, he explained to me that he was going to give it one final attempt before calling his boss. I expressed that it was not fair for him to keep going and requested that he get his boss to do it, withdrawing my consent for him to place my epidural. I was pressured by the two midwives in the room and anaesthetist to let him keep going and give it a final attempt. After the epidural was finally placed, the anaesthetist said "I'm worried that you might have a nasty headache tomorrow" referring to post-dural puncture headaches, caused by a spinal fluid leak to the brain.

He proceeded to test my epidural at a very low dose (with no pain coverage) for 2.5 hours, whilst I had no option but to stay on my back in the bed. The obstetrician came around, concerned about my lack of progress, and explained that she would need to place a catheter to empty my bladder. I told her that I would not let her do that to me without pain relief. She proceeded to try and convince me, stating the implications of my non-compliance and bargaining with me for the midwife to do it instead. I continued to decline and alternatively offered to get up and go to the toilet as my epidural wasn't working anyway.

She would not let me get up. I offered for them to get something to empty my bladder into and was told that in labour a woman's bladder doesn't empty effectively. She eventually waited until I had the appropriate pain relief. In the end, I ended up having an vacuum assisted vaginal delivery. I suffered with post-dural puncture headaches (migraine, sensitivity to light, unable to stand straight, unable to sit up, etc) for weeks and was readmitted into hospital. I have ever since been seeking help for post-natal depression and PTSD.