

Submission
No 622

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

In October 2022 I was 39 Weeks pregnant. As a first time mum whose waters had broken I was advised to undergo a pitocin drip to start contractions. At 7am my first contractions hit hard and fast 3 in 10 within the first hour. At 4pm I opted for an epidural and was administered at 5.30pm. I was shocked hearing from one of the nurses they were 15 staff short of being a fully functional maternity ward and that general patients were also in the ward.

I also suffered Hyperemesis Gravidarum and had vomiting for the whole 9 months of my pregnancy so I was dealing with a lot mentally with my pregnancy not going the way i'd imagined.

I progressed very slowly 1cm an hour until 10pm when I was fully dilated. The nurses advised me to wait and rest but my body wanted to push. During delivery I pushed for an hour until babies heart rate began to drop and the doctor was called to deliver via forceps. As she was about to perform the episiotomy I had a contraction and sustained a significant fourth degree tear. Tearing from my vagina into the muscle of the anal sphincter and causing some blood loss. I held my baby for 30min while they delivered my placenta and I was wheeled away from her to undergo emergency surgery. For 2 hours I laid while they repaired me. Not knowing where my baby was or how long it would be I felt numb. The staff were so kind but nothing prepared me for the ongoing pain and trauma associated with this kind of tear. I had difficulty opening my bowels due to the tear and was unable to sit for the first 3 months post partum.

understandably I developed post partum depression and at my 3 month check up at the gynecology clinic in the hospital was given a depression scale test to complete. When the Doctor realised I needed help the resident doctor suggested I wait at the hospital to speak to someone through mental health by sitting in ED. As a new mum the thought of exposing my baby to the germs of the ED frightened me and I said that I wouldn't be able to do that as I was not prepared with enough supplies for baby. The doctor said she would put a referral in and the mental health team would call me.

Sadly no such call came. Fighting suicidal thoughts for a week I went to see my Gp who saw me every 3 days until I got onto some medication. The hospital head midwife called a week later to "check in" and offer support. I explained I was looking for someone to talk to and she recommended Gidget Foundation in the meantime until mental health outpatient called me. (sadly this never occurred and this was the first and only time I heard from the hospital to follow up)

It makes me sad for the women who have no GP to support them or feel shame about coming for support. I found gidget to be helpful but 10 free sessions inadequate to deal with the additional trauma I sustained having to have post birth surgery for lesions on my perineum, additional anal complications and pain sitting and bending.

I would like the parliament to consider the amount of funding needed to support mental health. As a mum I cannot afford \$200 for a psychologist appointment and feel with this kind of serious trauma more support is needed.

I am also disappointed in how the hospital dealt with the situation and there was no capacity to follow up or refer me to outpatient. I wonder how many fall between the cracks. I am so grateful to the Australian Birth Trauma Association for there support. More funding needs to be provided in this area to support women experiencing birth related trauma.