

Submission
No 635

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

I still have recurring and intrusive thoughts about my birth experience with my daughter.

I feel my obstetrician betrayed me, after telling me throughout my pregnancy that I could give birth in any position I wanted and that she would not intervene unless it was medically necessary. That the bed technology was so advanced that even if I had an epidural, I could be assisted into the position I wanted by my husband, the midwives, and the bed.

It's worth noting that my obstetrician, [REDACTED] has some kind of physical disability. She is unable to move freely or walk without some kind of support. I was concerned when I first noticed this but I didn't want to judge her based on her movement and told myself she must still be very good at her job despite this.

I went into labour two days before my due date, on a Sunday, and my obstetrician was not working at the hospital that day. After I had been labouring for a few hours, all on track according to the midwife on the day shift, two more midwives came in and said that they had instructions to break my waters for me. I declined.

They returned an hour later and said again they were to break my waters on the orders of my obstetrician, who was not going to arrive to the hospital until it was time to start actively pushing. I again declined.

They returned at 6pm and did not ask me again. They told me, we're going to break your waters now and then your obstetrician will be on her way. And they broke my waters. I and the baby were not in any medical distress and my original midwife said I was textbook on course, I did not need to have my waters broken. All that would do would be to speed up my labour and I was already five mins apart with contractions.

My obstetrician arrived, and they moved the bed so that I was on my back with my feet in stirrups. This is NOT how I wanted to give birth and I had expressed that through my entire pregnancy. I know that this particular position causes more stress and damage to the birthing woman and requires more interventions.

[REDACTED] sat herself between my thighs and coached me on pushing. After a few pushes, it became clear my baby was not coming out. I said to her "this doesn't feel right, I want to turn over. This is not the right position."

She said "I have you in the best position. You need to push harder."

I was actively pushing for two hours. Mind you the average for a first time mum is closer to one hour. [REDACTED] sat herself between my thighs, I feel, because she was not physically capable of assisting my birth if I was on my side or on all fours if she was required to stand and not sit.

She said if I didn't push harder I would need an emergency c-section. They used a vacuum which got my daughter past my pubic bone but it slipped off her head due to her hair. [REDACTED] then gave me an episiotomy to 'make space'.

I ended up with agony in my lower back for months, reduced sensation in my vagina from the episiotomy, and a prolapse from hours of pushing in a position where there was no movement.

I actively asked to change position. I was shut down. I asked for no interventions unless medically necessary, and I was forced to have my waters broken, and forced to birth in a position I did not want and that I could FEEL was not right, and that caused me to then require more interventions.

I am shaking with repressed anger as I write this. This was not care. This was obstetric violence. [REDACTED] did what suited her and her schedule without a thought for what this amazing experience could have been for me as a new mother. She did not want to work on a Sunday or over night so she forced my labour to speed up by breaking my waters WITHOUT MY PERMISSION. She could not move freely so did not allow me to turn on my own volition, and did not permit the midwives to help me. Because of HER disability. If she cannot assist a birthing mother in more than one position, she should not be the obstetrician in the room.

I raised my issues with her in my post-partum appointment. I said that I did not think I would have required so many interventions or had so many injuries if I was allowed to birth in a different position. Her response? "Well it's impossible to know the answer to that. I had you in the best position. But I promise you, the next one will come flying straight out."

It's been one year (7 Aug) today and I still cannot think of this memory without feeling anger and frustration and helplessness. I am now pregnant with my second child and I am afraid to entrust my next child's birth to an obstetrician because I don't want them to power trip when I'm at my most vulnerable.

I have met with another obstetrician and explained my concerns and he has been very reassuring, however my anxiety is still present.

Please, please can you read my story and understand that just because mothers are patients in this hospital setting, it doesn't mean that we have no understanding of our bodies or that we give up our agency. This is an amazing, awe-inspiring, and altogether terrifying experience and we NEED to be supported and not controlled UNLESS MEDICALLY NECESSARY. Please help to make this understood. Thank you.