

Submission
No 636

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

My first birth was horrific. First of all, the midwife did not pick up on the fact my baby was breech until I was 40 weeks. I was then put onto a team with a brilliant Dr (Dr [REDACTED] who specialise in breech births. In a scan they told me I no longer had the right to choose to leave the hospital as my baby had become a footling breech. I said ok and went along with the suggestion to do a C-section. It was the [REDACTED], a training hospital, and after a gruelling 6 hour wait I finally got a slot. The most horrific procedure ensued. Somebody who had never done a combined spinal block (epidural + block) proceeded to insert, fail, re-insert, fail and re-insert a needle into my spine having not administered enough anaesthetic, until the pain made me black out. I have a high pain threshold but this was beyond compare.

I was then taken into theatre, Dr [REDACTED] was amazing but the person who had administered the spinal block combo had gone way overboard and I started convulsing, itching all over and feeling extremely disoriented and sick. By the time they handed me my baby, I was extremely foggy. They then sent her off with her father and our MGP midwife and I was left with nobody to support me whilst I was pushed and pulled and sewed and feeling aware but completely awfully drugged.

The next part was worse, they wheeled me into a dark room (it was only 6.45pm) and told me not to make any noise or sound happy as the person in the bed next to me (in an otherwise empty giant room of beds) had just lost a baby in the surgeon's room before me. It was horrific being kept in this twilight lighting, unable to make a noise or even see my baby. A vile nurse then came over, with zero niceties pushed me onto my side and shoved my breast into my baby's mouth, for what was to be her and our first attempt at breastfeeding. For someone who had been deeply into reading up on attachment parenting, yoga, natural birth and baby-led care, this was the polar opposite of what I wanted these experiences to be. Not being able to feel or show joy in our first moments together because they had cruelly (for both of us) placed me next to a woman who had just lost their baby, was beyond traumatic.

It didn't get better on the ward. It was horrendous. The trauma of it all led to severe post-natal depression, so bad the acute care team at the hospital needed to be involved. When I had my second child, the fear surrounding a repeat of the last experience meant I didn't even get half way through the pregnancy before needing to be referred to the maternal mental health team. By day 2 post-party I was being medicated. I had such extreme fear of a repeat of the last birth and beyond that I could not cope at all. Not to mention the hospital care was terrible. When you have a second or subsequent child, nobody even walks into your room. Thank God I was with the MGP team as at least I had a midwife looking out for me. Her name was [REDACTED] and she was wonderful. She delivered my second baby, naturally and exactly as I had hoped it would go. Outside of her, the maternity care I experienced was traumatic and utterly rubbish. Australia needs to do so much better. Bring back more midwife led care and stop revoking mother's rights to choose how they want to birth.

I live in the UK now. Almost everyone I know here (including the most educated and affluent circles) births at home. They can do so with zero care or with professional midwives. They all have the knowledge that there is brilliant care on call at any time should they need further medical support. Nobody is being flushed to get induced like in Aus. Elective Caesarians are rarely chosen. Brilliant NCT support communities are built up before birth. Daily visits from midwives once home.

I will never forget the horrors, physical pain, emotional pain and actual trauma I went through. It was a gigantic mess. I wish I had sued. It took me years to recover. Maybe I still haven't and maybe I never will.