

Submission
No 639

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 6 August 2023

Partially
Confidential

I will not remember every detail because this is still difficult to process but I am submitting this because I know that we need change in the birthing system.

I fell pregnant at 21 years old, I had no experience with pregnancy through friends or family, but I knew I wanted to birth naturally.

I submitted myself to [REDACTED] hospital ([REDACTED] NSW) with abdominal pain at 32 weeks. Within 24 hours of close monitoring, my baby was fine, but my body was not. I was diagnosed with HELLP syndrome, a high blood pressure complication during pregnancy which affected my platelet levels. I arrived at the hospital at 10am, and by 8 am the next day, the doctors gathered in my room to 'discuss' with me my 'options'. No one had explained to me what was going on until then. I got told that my platelet levels were dropping and the baby needed to come out. I understand that hellp syndrome does not clear up on its own, however I was telling the doctors that I felt significantly better the next day without having taken any pain killers. My pain had resided and I felt better. They took my bloods again, my platelet levels had risen.

The obstetrician came in and told me that now was the time to deliver the baby because I had platelet levels that they were comfortable doing a spinal with as opposed to going under general anesthetic. I told them that I didn't care if I had to go under anesthetic, but that I wanted to remain pregnant, it felt right in my body. I told them I wanted to wait and see if my platelets would continue to rise as they were, or if they would plummet again.

The obstetrician did not take well to my response (I was already feeling like a tiny insignificant voice) she said to me that she didn't want to wait. She said that it suit her schedule better to give me a caesarean now rather than later. She said she didn't have as many nurses on later in the evening and if they had to deliver the baby later, I would not have as good of a team doing the surgery, and that I could be at risk of dying from that. She said if I didn't want to die I should get the c section now.

So I said yes. My baby was removed from my body as I sobbed and cried on the operating table.

They took my baby away to another room. I was not allowed to see him for 6 hours.

I found out that he went to the NICU because he was too weak to be in my arms (born at 32 weeks) No one told me that my baby would be taken away from me and withheld from my touch for days. (forgive me if this is just a known fact about premature birth but I had never heard of the NICU and did not know that premature babies had to be separated from their mothers)

My wishes to wait to really know the right time to birth was denied.

My baby was taken away from me and I had to battle different NICU nurses daily begging them to let me hold my baby. As soon as I got to hold him 4 days later he responded so positively and his observations improved impeccably, despite being told that me being near my baby might 'startle him' and send him into remission.

I do not feel I was provided with all of the information that I needed to make an informed decision.

I do not feel that my wishes were truly respected

I feel I was coerced into suiting the obstetricians timetable.

And I paid the price for it in pain, heartache and traumatising prolonged separation from my baby.

My physical body was aching with pain being apart from him while I was forced to spend time in my hospital room away from my baby in NICU, as the nicu nurses told me I shouldn't be there all the time. I was physically hurting from the pain of separation.

If I knew that this would have happened and I was able to make MY OWN decision for my body and baby it would have left less of a scar on the both of us.