

Submission
No 575

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

In 2020 I watched my partner birth our first daughter at the [REDACTED] Hospital. She had a smooth induction, however once it came to pushing our baby out she was put “on the clock” and the last hour of birth was just frantic.

As a first time dad and not having witnessed childbirth before, I just assumed you trust the doctors and do what they say and don't question them.

We had a lovely team of midwives through the midwifery group practice, however the timing of giving birth coincided with our midwife's shift ending, hospital midwives we had never met taking over, and obstetricians taking control in the final stages of birth.

My partner had been pushing for 2 hours when the doctors decided they were going to “help” our baby out. There was never an explanation given, my partner was told to lay on her back on the bed, her legs put into stirrups. The doctors told us they were going to give her nerve blocking needles so they could give her an episiotomy as they wanted to use instruments to get our baby out. After my partner was given the nerve blockers, she was able to push our baby out on her own with no further interventions. To this day we do not understand why this decision was made for us, we were given no indication that our baby may have been under any distress. In the short birth debriefs my partner had with the midwives and doctors afterwards, no one was able to explain what really happened in those final moments and the only closure my partner was given was “you were getting tired and your contractions weren't lasting long enough”. While my partner was not in a position to verbalise her thoughts in the moment, she has expressed in the moment she felt nothing but trust for her body and her baby and believed she could do it.

It felt like her experience was disrupted by a hospital policy around how long a woman was allowed to push before interventions and as though there was no medical reasoning as to why they wanted to intervene.

I watched the doctors assume consent with my partner, they didn't inform - and they did not ASK for consent. At the time I did not know there was any reason to question the doctors - they are supposed to be the professionals and have our best interests at heart.

The next concerning event was after returning home. My partner was given clexane and was instructed to continue with this injection herself. She was sent home without being taught how to perform these injections. She was also on antibiotics for reasons uncertain. After arriving home, my partner read the inserts of these medications and I watched her go through panic attacks around whether these medications were safe while breastfeeding as the inserts indicated they might not be. Her midwives explained the doctors would have weighed up the risks vs benefits before prescribing.

I believe these trauma's could have been avoided if the doctors present at birth could have taken the time to explain why they wanted to intervene, and waited to obtain INFORMED consent -instead of assuming it.

The fears around the medications could have been avoided if the prescribing doctor could have explained why each medication may have been necessary as well as discussing risks/benefits. ESPECIALLY while breastfeeding.