

Submission  
No 568

## INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

**Name:** Name suppressed

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Partially  
Confidential

I had a wonderful pregnancy, no issues, or complications. Then came close to my due date. The midwife, as part of a MGP, did several membrane sweeps to bring labour on from one week before my due date. I did not know I could refuse and wait for my body to go into labour spontaneous being a first time mum. I just trusted she knew what she was doing. I also didn't realise what it entailed and how it was forcing my body to go into labour prematurely. Four days post due date she did a final sweep on a Friday and said I wouldn't make it through the weekend. She was right.

It started fine on track for vaginal delivery. 3am Sunday waters broke. No contractions until 11pm. 1am Monday they were light but consistent so called midwife and went in. After a shower the contractions stopped. They didn't start up again and so at 4am I was induced as it had been 25hrs since my waters broke. It went from nothing to 100% in 3 seconds. I started at 2cm dilated. By 1130am I was 5cm. I was out on the gas because I felt like pushing and it was too early. At 230pm baby's heart beat slowed and midwife investigated and found baby was ok but I was only 6cm dilated and my cervix was thickening. I was then given an epidural to minimise my need to push. At 3pm the midwife came back with the Dr who suggested a caesarean was necessary.

We initially refused because we really wanted a vaginal birth, but the Dr insisted that since I had only dilated 1cm in 4hrs it was unlikely I'd get to 10cm so I was prepared for caesarean. On the operating table I was so nauseous and having a reaction to the epidural where I couldn't stop shaking. At 7:06pm Monday night my daughter was born and I couldn't care less. I was feeling so sick that I immediately told them to take her away. Those precious first minutes of bonding gone. My recovery was slow due to a lot of pain postnatal. 2 1/2 weeks later I had another emergency surgery due to the discovery of what was suspected to be the cause of the pain.

I had a lot of pain still 2 weeks after the caesarean which I thought was normal. Called my gp who was concerned since it wasn't normal to barely be able to move 2 weeks after. Went in, he sent me to the hospital emergency department as he thought it was my appendix. After hours of waiting and some tests the ED drs decided I was constipated and gave me an enema, but never even performed an Ultrasound. Sent me back to my gp the next day to get a referral for an ultrasound. The day after getting the referral I got an ultrasound. They thought I had a twisted ovary so they called ahead to the ED and sent me. I went in got checked by the drs and prepped for a 30-40min surgery. 6hrs later I woke up in the infection ward with 3 others, without my baby.

The next morning my husband told me (I didn't want to know the night before) that when they went in they saw my ovary was fine, but I had multiple adhesions, Fitz Hugh Curtis syndrome, a suspected abscess on my bowel and what was thought to be a widespread infection across my abdomen. Part of my bowel was thus removed. Afterwards I had very little pain except from where the cuts were. Several months later after the lab results on the bowel that was removed it was discovered that I did not have an infection but rather 'vernix caeseosa peritonitis' an extremely rare inflammation of the abdomen. So the removal of

bowel was unnecessary. I was traumatised by what happened, was diagnosed with PND and had extreme anxiety to the point of seeing my baby die in vividly horrific ways. I was referred to a birth trauma counsellor after being discharged, whom after several weeks of phone conversation because I couldn't get in to the clinic, due to the anxiety and not wanting to leave the house, referred me onto a face-to-face psychologist. Physically I wasn't able to pick up my daughter until she was 10 weeks old. I still struggle when I think back to what happened to me, especially when friends give birth seemingly so easily.

All this to say, I believe the early interventions and membrane sweeps set me up to fail because my baby was not ready to come out. I was also treated poorly by a nurse after the birth, who told me "I wasn't doing it right, no wonder my baby is crying" when I was trying to walk my baby to sleep because I was in too much pain to hold her and rock her. No compassion for a first time mum who had just had major surgery and was still in great pain. There's so much more but I've written enough. Something has to change so that women are once again empowered and informed to trust their bodies to do what they were designed to do and have done for thousands of years.