

Submission
No 587

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

I gave birth to my first child in February 2022 at [REDACTED] Private Hospital, under the care of a very experienced Private Obstetrician.

I was diagnosed with gestational diabetes at 18 weeks, and was told at that appointment by my doctor that I would be induced by 39 weeks, and I didn't have a choice. As a first time mum I said OK as she was the doctor and should know best, and didn't ask any questions. I managed my GDM with diet and exercise only, and was still told I would be induced. At one of my appointments I asked why to which she told me we know that carrying after 39 weeks increases the risk of still birth. This really had me freaked out and I didn't question anything else. I was never encouraged to ask questions or even felt like I was given the time to do so. All my appointments felt rushed and I felt like she just wanted me to hurry up so she could go to the next patient.

I went into the hospital at 38 weeks plus 6 days and had the cervadil put in to soften my cervix at 6:45pm. I was told this wouldn't induce labour on its own but would soften the cervix enough so they could break my waters at 8am the next day. I went back to the ward with my husband and settled in for the night.

I was called back to the delivery suite at around 10:30pm that night to take my sleeping tablet and panadeine fort as they said they couldn't give it to me in the ward. I was told to come alone without my husband, so I complied. I took the pain relief and told the midwife on duty that I had some light cramping but nothing bad.

She put the monitor on me to check the babies heartrate and saw that it was accelerated and said it was a bit worrying so wanted me to stay there for monitoring. She had called my doctor after 30 minutes of the heart rate not slowing down and the doctor said keep her there for 4 hours to monitor. the midwife then asked to do a cervical check to which I said OK. my cervix was still hard and closed so was extremely painful, and at that point I started bleeding to which the midwife said " oh, why are you bleeding?". I was given a pad to put in. By this stage the cramping had intensified to which I told the midwife and she said it's just the medication working, don't worry about it but I can give you a shot of morphine. She injected the morphine and told me to rest so i was left alone in the birthing suite (my husband had no idea what was going on and was asleep in the ward).

I got some relief for about 40 minutes and then my pain really intensified. I called the midwife in and she said again it was just the medication and I wasn't in labour, and it was just "niggling pain". I asked her is i was being a wuss to which she responded "yes I think you are, you just need to get on with it". I asked if the monitor was showing contractions to which she replied "well technically yes, but it's not real contractions it's just niggling pain".

I told her at this point I was in agony and moving around on the bed in so much pain and screaming. She told me to calm down and I just needed to get on with it and asked if I wanted

the gas, to which I said yes I'll try. The gas made me extremely nauseous and dizzy and I told her I didn't want to continue using it. She told me "you are not using it properly, it will help if you do it the way I told you". She kept telling me to take deep breaths and inhale the gas however it was still making me feel sick and dizzy and I kept telling her I wanted to stop, she kept trying to get me to use it. She didn't support me or care for me in a way I thought a midwife would.

Eventually she said she would do a check even though she doesn't think anything would have happened. She did another check on me at around 5am (last one was before midnight and I had told her multiple times in that space i was in extreme pain). To her surprise I was now 8cm dilated. I said I wanted the epidural to which she said "oh it's too late for that now". she got my husband and called my doctor then.

while we were waiting I wanted to move around to help the pain, she refused to let me. I wanted to be on all fours with the top half of my body over the bed as this felt more comfortable, she told me no I had to go on my back.

During the pushing phase, she told me over and over that "I wasn't doing a good enough job at pushing and I needed to do better for my baby". I was heartbroken at how I was being spoken to. She also told me the Doctor wouldn't be as nice to me as what she was and threatened that the doctor would need to use the vacuum if I didn't do a better job.

My daughter came out and was absolutely perfect - 1st Apgar score was 8 and second was 9. My doctor then started pushing on my tummy to get the placenta out which was very painful, and kept checking her watch. She said if it didn't come out by the 15 minute mark I would need to have surgery to remove it. I felt like this was very rushed as doing my research, it can take 1-2 hours for the placenta to come out naturally.

It didn't come out and I underwent surgery for a retained placenta. I lost a lot of blood, after surgery my blood pressure dropped and I fainted. I also required an iron infusion.

I felt like I had choices taken away from me in the pregnancy and birth, was not hear or listened to and was belittled and made to feel like I was not good enough and I was exaggerating the pain. The midwife did not believe me when I said I think I'm in labour, so i spent the entire labour on my own without the support of my husband or even a supportive person by my side. It was extremely isolating and depressing experience. I felt like I was a burden.

I've also since done research and understand the WHO doesn't recommend induction with GDM if it is managed by diet and exercise, so a lot of my experience could have been avoided.

At [REDACTED] Private as well, they send all babies with diabetic mothers to the special care nursery, regardless of how their sugars are and they can only be discharged once seen by the pediatrician. My daughters sugars were perfect after birth, however due to their "policy" I was without my baby by my side for almost 2 days (as there was a delay with the doctor discharging her because he was "busy"). I'm not sure why they can't do the 3 hour sugar check in the room with the mother there, so the baby can stay with their mother provided all is well of course.