

Submission  
No 855

## INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

**Name:** Name suppressed

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Partially  
Confidential

Good Evening

I am hopeful I am successful in presenting a late submission into the enquiry into birth trauma. I was only made aware today and I believe my story is relevant and deserves to be heard!

My name is \_\_\_\_\_, I am 30 years old living in \_\_\_\_\_. I gave birth to my 4th child, \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ on 7/11/2022.

I was a patient of Dr \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_ hospital for the duration of my pregnancy. I was considered high risk for Obstetric Cholestasis, from previous pregnancies. This was my 4th pregnancy, and third premature baby, so I was no stranger to NICU. I was advised by Dr \_\_\_\_\_ that I would be induced between 34- 35 weeks gestation at \_\_\_\_\_ Hospital and had 2 antenatal visits in \_\_\_\_\_ prior to induction.

As I was being induced prematurely I asked Dr \_\_\_\_\_ when I would be receiving my steroid shots as done in my previous pregnancies. I was advised that after 34 weeks steroids are not routinely given and provided me with the evidence to support her decision. Still unsure, I received a second opinion from Dr \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ hospital, who backed up Dr \_\_\_\_\_ advice that after 34 weeks, steroids are not recommended. This information made me comfortable in my decision to not have the steroid shots.

I arrived at \_\_\_\_\_ birthing unit on 6/11/22, I was 34+0 gestation. A foley catheter was put in place and the next morning I returned to birthing unit to have my waters broken. As the midwife was breaking my waters, another midwife entered questioning why I had not received steroids. I explained the situation and she told me that the Paeds team are encouraging me to have them. I explained that this was the advice given prior to induction and as I was having my waters broken and expected to have this baby within 12 hours therefore not giving the steroids time to take effect. Not long after, I had the paediatric team enter my room again questioning why I was "refusing" to have the shots. I explained as I did to the midwife. There was heavy pressure put on me to have the steroids, I became even more distressed and confused not knowing what to do. I elaborated that it has put me in a difficult position not knowing what the right decision is and that I would prefer to just stick to the original plan of not having them as I just want to focus on being calm for this labour. The paediatrician handed me a print out of the guidelines to steroid shots, and the nurse said "I hope you're aware of the implications of your decision" and they all left the room. I was distraught and put a heavy guilt on myself that if my baby required breathing support, it would be my fault.

After 5 hours of labour, \_\_\_\_\_ heart was showing decelerations, I was 5cm at the time. Repositioning was attempted without success and the team discussed an emergency cesarean. I was reluctant and explained that in my previous labours, I went from 5cm to 10cm/pushing very quick. Minutes later I had a bloody show and felt the urge to push, I asked

if they could recheck my dilation, this was declined and a consent form was held to my face. I was reluctant to sign and again was demanded that I sign the form, one person (unknown) shouting "sign it or you wont have your baby". Devastated at the thought, I signed the consent form. However, I knew I was ready to push. I had a bloody show and the urge to push.

I was transported to theater and outside the theatre room Dr [redacted] told the team the plan, which was to check my cervix on the table and if I have not reached 10cm a spinal block would be given and a cesarean would be completed. If I was 10cm I would be given the opportunity to deliver vaginally. I was left in the corridor with the anaesthetists, my mother was asked to sit in the waiting room. My mum became distressed and asked why she couldnt be with me, a nurse replying "I cant give you that information". I was then administered a spinal block in the corridor. I shouted at the Anaesthasist that he wasnt supposed to give me it but he ignored me. I had no one with me to advocate for me, I didnt even have drs present monitoring my baby who was supposedly in distress.

I was put on the theatre table and the OB checked my cervix, as expected I was 10cm and bub had entered the birth canal. I was encouraged to push. I attempted to but due to my spinal block causing numbness and low blood pressure, I was blacking out and forceps were used.

I am still traumatised by how my baby was handed to me. He swelled and bruised instantly, he had imprints of the forceps across his face and eyes. His neck was wider than his head, his eyes fused shut from the swelling, his jaw was pushed back and his ears were down to his chin. I honestly believed my child was disabled. He cried and was breathing. I asked for skin to skin and delayed cord clamping but after 30 seconds the drs began pressuring me to stop and clamp the cord. My baby was crying, there was no reason they needed to clamp and take him away. I was robbed of a normal, beautiful birthing experience and now have horrific flashbacks.

During the birth I was regularly pressured to recieve a syntocin drip. Due to a negative experience in my first birth, I strongly declined. After [redacted] was born, I was administered the drip. Angry and confused, I demanded they remove the drip, to be told they couldn't until it was finished.

I asked why it was administered and I was told it was to prevent PPH. Although I had normal blood clotting time that was tested that day.

[redacted] was taken to the NICU and was put on CPAP, when I left recovery to be with him within 2 hours after delivery, [redacted] was on CPAP at 21% Oxygen, which is AIR. He stayed on CPAP for 3 more days, his saturations 100% the entire time, even during cares with no breathing support. His gases were also normal. I regularly question the need for CPAP, told its because I didnt have steroids therefor needing pressure. Passive aggressive comments were regularly made by staff and the paed who was present at delivery and handed me the guidelines prior to induction. He did not require surfactant but the paed seeked advice from colleagues if he should because mum didnt have steroids. I lost count how many times I received comments

about the steroids, I felt a heavy judgement. It was discovered at \_\_\_\_\_ Hospital that \_\_\_\_\_ has funneling of the chest wall, which is pronounced when he breaths or has the hiccups, not because he is working hard at breathing. I heavily question whether CPAP was actually required, or if they did it just to prove a point.

\_\_\_\_\_ face continued to bruise, predominately the left of his face and the back right of his skull. I requested oral Vitamin K prior to birth, but was strongly encouraged to have IM Vitamin K due to the extent of his head injuries, although it wasn't what I wanted, I did consent. I repeatedly asked for a head ultrasound due to the concerns of swelling and bleeding, this was ignored no matter how many times I asked. When I was transferred to \_\_\_\_\_ Hospital, they were absolutely shocked that a head ultrasound was not conducted at the time.

On day 0, \_\_\_\_\_ was tachycardic and groaning, I questioned if he had pain, this was dismissed and again blamed on the fact that I didn't have steroids.

Due to the bruising, \_\_\_\_\_ had extended light therapy for jaundice for 6 days. This again meant no contact with my baby, missing out on the important skin to skin and breastfeeding establishment.

I was regularly questioned if \_\_\_\_\_ looked like my other children, and a genetic blood screening was conducted (results still pending). However as time goes on, and his face heals, we can see that it was injuries from the forceps not a genetic abnormality.

On day 6, \_\_\_\_\_ was transferred to \_\_\_\_\_ hospital as it was closer to home. His facial injuries were assessed by the Paeds team. His prolonged bruising and swelling raised questions to whether \_\_\_\_\_ had a cheekbone fracture but due to radiation an Xray was not conducted. He had a .5cm lump on his jaw that was in line with the forceps, diagnosed as scar tissue. \_\_\_\_\_ has fleeting desaturations and needs to sleep in a prone position because of the positioning of his jaw, an ENT appt is required.

After 17 days, \_\_\_\_\_ was discharged from \_\_\_\_\_ Hospital. He still has a black eye and swelling on his nose and cheekbone. Permanent damage to his face and brain is yet unknown.

I am angry for my child and I am angry for myself. Many of these outcomes could have been heavily avoided.

I would have been able to deliver my baby safely if the anesthetist listened.

I was coerced into consenting to have an instrumental. The forceps were incorrectly placed and my child was injured as a result. If I presented with my child to ED with these injuries, I'd be arrested!

I had a right to make decisions for myself and my child, free from judgement and without coercion. I deserved to have my feelings and concerns validated by staff, not dismissed and request for an ultrasound denied.

I am suffering from severe PTSD and grief as a result, and my mother is also having a hard time dealing with the trauma. [redacted] deserved better, he did not have to come into this world this way.

I have submitted 2 written complaints to the hospital and I am yet to receive a written response despite being reassured verbally that I would receive one.

[redacted] is now 9 months old. He is developmentally delayed and under investigation after having episodes of seizures. [redacted] still has markings on his face from the forceps, as well as an asymmetrical smile.

I have spent the last 9 months grieving and being angry for my child. Angry for the birth we deserved and for the newborn experience that was robbed. I spent 6 months exclusively pumping breastmilk as his jaw was unable to open to suck milk. I needed to be prescribed motillium for those months as I struggled to produce milk from the post traumatic stress and the use of syntocin that I declined at the time of birth. Not knowing what permanent damage has been caused is the worst part of all.

Although I received telephone correspondence from the head of Gynaecology apologising for our experience and stating that the DRs involved received training following the improper use of forceps. I am yet to feel any clarity or closure in our experience, I believe it has been swept under the rug.

I am still waiting for an explanation for

1. Why I was given a spinal block when I was supposed to attempt a vaginal birth ( I was 10cm and had the urge to push).
2. Why my mother was taken to another room by a nurse and I was left alone with the anaesthetist who then administered the spinal block. I had no one to advocate for me and baby was not being monitored when he was supposedly in distress.
3. Why I was given a syntocin drip AFTER [redacted] was born and I had repeatedly refused the drip throughout the labour. Having normal blood clotting time therefore low risk of PPH.
4. When I was told my drip had Syntocin in it and demanded it be removed I was refused and told "I have to let it finish".

5. I was bullied and ridiculed by midwife staff for not receiving steroid injections prior to labour despite that being the advice from Dr [redacted] prior to delivery.
6. I was bullied and ridiculed by the paediatrician and nurses in the NICU for not receiving the steroid shots, blaming me for [redacted] being on CPAP. Passive aggressive comments being said regularly.
7. [redacted] not requiring CPAP as he was able to breathe AIR and had normal sats when off CPAP.
8. My concerns for [redacted] bruising and risk of brain damage being ignored, was declined ultrasound. The possible fractures and soft tissue damage to his jaw, cheeks and nose.
9. My concerns for [redacted] pain being ignored despite showing many signs of pain. Ie frowning, groaning, stiffness, tachycardic.
10. Being pressured into signing a consent form for a forcep delivery against my will, being threatened "you'll have a dead baby if you dont".

If I could go back in time, I NEVER would have had my baby in [redacted] Hospital, and I fear for every woman and child who does.

I honestly believe he would have been safer being birthed at home than in the hands of your team.

Thank you,