

Submission
No 676

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Miss Grace Johnson

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Partially
Confidential

After much consideration and communicating with my Midwives from MGP , I want to express my disappointment with aspects of my care throughout my admission in late September, 2022.

Whilst my initial care prior to my birth was exceptional by all departments over the 39wks, my post birth experience however was both upsetting and traumatising. For a first time mother and a single parent, the birth and midwifery care was less than ok. I felt voiceless, pressured, overwhelmed and discarded by the maternity unit.

Post the birth of my son , he was taken to special care and once I was in the maternity ward I felt very vulnerable and upset especially when being separated from my newborn child and him being unwell.

Although nursing staff were amazing; at times I would ask for help, medical advice or support and was made to feel a nuisance rather than a patient. I expressed concerns about inadequate pain management and how it was making me feel not to mention no one told me the risks it could have on my newborn child. I asked for alternate medication and the Dr was supposed to schedule it but I never saw another Dr until 2 days later and they 'forgot' to administer the medication. Further explaining to the Dr I was having dizzy spells, loss of vision in my left eye and increased nausea, nothing was taken note of or investigated to further the explanation of what may be causing me to feel this way. At this time I expressed my concern about my stitches being infected as I was in excruciating pain and mentally couldn't tolerate it, I was made to feel dramatic and like I couldn't handle post birth and not a good mum.

My whole vaginal area felt itchy, sore, swollen and painful and almost begging the midwives to examine the area, it wasn't offered even as peace of mind and no one took a swab of the area or a urine sample to test for infection or a UTI. It wasn't until the day before being discharged (day 4 in the hospital) that from MGP said she would examine the area and told me the stitches were almost infected. Thankfully she brought this to my attention and addressed the appropriate advice on how to avoid infection. I also later found out at a GP appointment the day after I had quite a nasty UTI, that was the reason I was feeling unwell, dizzy and could have caused loss of vision. I was low in iron and was supposed to be given iron medication but as the nurse proceeded to get the medication the doctor signalled "later, we have more patients to see", I later never received the iron supplement.

The last night of my stay it was first night out of special care and I was able to breast feed. I asked for help with his latch and the midwife was happy to help, she looked for 5 seconds and said "that looks great" and walked away. After feeding him I had bleeding nipples and was in tears as my baby was completely unsettled. I was left feeling unsupported and calling my family members crying to come and help me.

I asked first thing Monday morning around 7am (26th September) to be discharged as I got the 'ok' to leave the day prior. It wasn't till 8pm that I left the hospital, begging them to let my baby and I go home. The paper work for being discharged took all day. Feeling overwhelmed and traumatised of my experience and being a new mother taking her baby home for the first time this wasn't my expectation. Out of mine and the Drs control my whole entire birth plan was non existent due to medial reasonings which I whole heartedly accepted. But the post birth experience in the maternity ward was under supported and started my journey into motherhood to a completely negative experience that I wish no one to experience.

The following week (1 week post partum) I had advised MGP I believe my stitches had dehisced and I was bleeding a significant amount. Being told to come in I was looked after by a lovely midwife and she made me feel like I did the right thing coming in and she got a Dr to come and look at the stitches. Again I expressed my concern for infection and asked for something to help with the pain management. That Dr took a swab and had a look at the stitches and advised me there was nothing else she could do to help me. I never got a phone call back about the results until 10 days later called to check in and asked how my stitches were after the infection and had I treated it. I was surprised to hear there was an infection as no one had gotten back to me about my results, I was told "no news is good news" if I didn't hear back from the hospital. Luckily enough my antibiotics from the UTI cleared up the infection.

The whole experience was horrendous and it has turned me off from ever having another baby as I felt like a horrible mum within the first 2-6 weeks of my sons life. It has taken 10mths and 23days to come to terms with my birth and post partum care, to this day I still cry and get anxious about the thought of how discouraged I was a new mother.