

Submission
No 644

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

I became pregnant in 2020 with my first baby. As I was not given the full set of options from my general GP I was of the opinion that seeking the guidance and assistance from an Obstetrician was the gold standard of birth care. I began my journey as a pregnant woman visiting her office, having all of the tests and scans. I was not aware that any of these tests or scans could be optional. I was not given this information.

I was diagnosed with gestational diabetes within my 24-28wk of pregnancy. I was monitored for this and was able to 'diet control' my diagnosis, despite me thinking that the diagnosis was not 100% right. I was told that due to this I would be required to have my baby by a certain number of weeks irrespective of if I or my baby was presenting with symptoms. I was also told that my OB would be taking a holiday and also a delivery prior to this date would be recommended. I was discouraged from making a birth plan as new my OB did not know how I would 'handle the pain'. I was given sheets of paper explaining pain management options with little guidance or explanation.

I spontaneously went into labour at 37 and 6 days. I had planned to deliver at [REDACTED] Private Hospital. Upon arrival I was 4cm dilated and continued to dilate ongoing for the remainder of the time without stall. My contractions and labour waves were increasing however it was quickly suggested my waters be broken to speed things up, of which I consented.

My OB entered the room after sometime and said to the midwife that a lady in the other room just had an epidural and was up eating a baguette and that she needed the midwife to go in there and hurry things along. The midwife that aided my birth was pushy and unhelpful. Once she returned to my room she indicated to me that if I was not pushing by the time my OB came back then she would want to do 'interventions'. This frightened me and I complied but commencing manual fully assisted pushing.

At no point was I aided in changing my position or given help in breathing instructions, I was asked to lay on my back and push. By the time my OB returned I had been manually pushing for sometime. I was then advised that I couldn't get the baby 'around the corner' and at this point the midwife was instructed to commence some kind of intervention and I was told by my OB that she'd need to do an episiotomy.

I exclaimed 'NO' but despite my wants this was performed anyway. My baby was born and despite my traumatic experience of being cut and sewn back up we were still over the moon to be new parents. We then spent 4 nights in [REDACTED] Private under the care of lovely midwives.

It was not until I returned home that I began to have thoughts/worries about why my body did not do what it was naturally meant to. I had not pain medications, I was dilating perfectly and my body felt good, I could not understand why. At my 4-6wk appointment with my OB I attempted to ask her why I required this intervention. She was really unable to tell me. She just said that if I had an episiotomy she must have thought I was going to tear. At no point did I receive a debrief, a chance for closure or a full explanation.

I carried this feeling around for the next 3 years until my 2nd pregnancy. This time I decided to undertake care through a midwife program. Within my care plan I was able to debrief my past birth experience and request my clinical notes from [REDACTED] Private Hospital. Within my notes it was indicated that I required the use of a ventouse due to a 'delayed 2nd stage' and that procedurally after this an episiotomy is required. This information I was never given and in further research it was indicated that my 2nd stage also was not delayed, I could have been given more time to feel the natural urge to push, I was just never given the opportunity.

Despite my experience it was great to find out this information and that in fact my body did not fail me but rather I was pushed into unnecessary interventions which led to more interventions which ended in the outcome I received. This experience haunted me for years and it's not been until now that I've been able to find closure and support. This system needs to change as we are systematically traumatizing uninformed women on a regular basis.