

Submission
No 651

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 3 August 2023

Partially
Confidential

The birth of my first son at [REDACTED] was a very traumatic experience which impacted my mental health greatly. The birth of your first child is supposed to be the best day of your life, but I can honestly say it was the worst experience I have ever had.

At 41 weeks I was scheduled for an induction as I had some hypertension and baby was measuring big. I had a long few days of the induction process- pessary, gel, balloon catheter- finally on a Saturday morning I was 2cm so could be moved to birthing suite to break my waters and begin the process.

There was a delay getting things started because waiting for anaesthetist to come start my epidural... they put the epidural in fine, it started working, put catheter in, broke my waters and started the artificial hormone to stimulate contractions. Had continuous monitoring on and baby was doing well. Midwife said she would examine every 4 hours, so at 5pm she said we were 6.5cm but could stretch to 7cm. We were both so happy and excited!

There was a change in shift times and a new midwife came on, I recognised her from when I had IV fluids given during my pregnancy with HG. From my previous experience with her she was very blunt/ borderline rude and therefore I was concerned. It was now the evening and I started feeling pain on one side of my bump.. it was immediate and so strong... I had to use the gas. I called the midwife and I said I was feeling really numb on one side not the other and needed to turn over, she was really rough turning me and I was made to feel like an inconvenience.

I turned over but could still feel pain... so asked for her to call the anaesthetist. The anaesthetist said to remain on the opposite side to give it a chance to work, despite me begging I was in agony, she then attempted to do a top up of the epidural.

Meanwhile I started to feel nausea and dizzy and started panicking. I had an examination at 9pm, the midwife said my cervix was still 6.5 and really swollen, she said she would call the surgeon. I assumed that meant c section.

The surgeon came and c section was decided, he said he had someone on the table but I would be next... might take couple of hours. But I was still struggling with my epidural and the pain, I was using the gas but felt exhausted, when I begged the midwife her reply was we are going for c section soon wait it out.

The time came for me to go for my c section, the porter turned up and by this point I was on gas non stop. The midwife said we have to go now let go of gas and so I had none for the transfer to theatre. I was hysterical and I screamed the whole way to theatre.

Once I got to theatre I was begging to be put to sleep. It was clear the epidural was failing, the anaesthetist did the ice test and I could feel everything on my side. I was panicking, my partner was taken off to get scrubs, they had no gas for me in theatre either they just kept saying we are topping up your epidural. However, nothing they was doing was working. .

Next thing they said take epidural out get her in the theatre and do spinal block... meanwhile my babies heart beat kept dropping so I was aware they were rushing. They told me to sit up

and get in foetal position. Obviously, I was like I cannot move I am so numb on one side please help me. They were all trying to get me to sit up on the bed, in the end they got my partner to hold me but he was struggling. They kept telling me right hip down right hip down but I couldn't move i was so worried the anaesthetist was going to put it in wrong place. The first block went in... did ice test and I could still feel it. I was still hysterical, so they did a second try. It felt like an eternity of hell.

Anaesthetist said as soon as they lay me down I would feel numb from the waist down... however, as soon as they lay me down my face felt numb, I felt like I couldn't breath... I couldn't open my eyes, I was panting trying to say help me help me. I could hear them say to my partner you need to leave, then I heard them say foetal heart beat 50 call a resus team, NICU now. I honestly thought I was going to die and so was my baby. I was just panting and panting, I heard them say I would feel better when operation was over and that I needed to keep doing what I was doing, I couldn't open my eyes drifting in and out of consciousness so didn't hear what my babies sex was, the first cry or anything... I know now that the spiral block was given too high.

Next thing I'm naked being transferred onto bed still panting but able to briefly open my eyes, they said your going to recovery. I didn't know where my partner was or if baby was even alive. Because it was a weekend I got transferred to recovery in [REDACTED] hospital which is like a 10 min walk from [REDACTED]. When I woke in recovery I finally got my breath back but everything was numb my face/ my hands. I eventually got my voice back to ask if baby was ok and what was the gender.. the recovery nurse just said oh boy, think your partners upstairs with him. Then she said ok they're bringing your baby now. The midwife came bustling in (without my partner), she said 'here he is big boy, let's do breast feed', she grabbed my boob... ofcourse I couldn't feel my hands and I was like hang on a minute let me see his face, where's [REDACTED].. she wasnt letting me have this magical moment of meeting my baby for the first time, there was no compassion, nothing. Upon reflection I'm devastated that she was one of the first people to hold my son and there's nothing I can do about it.

I know some of the events of my birth may have been unavoidable - such as the epidural failing, the spiral block going too high- but there are elements that could have made this experience much less traumatic. For example- not being left in pain because I'm going to theatre soon, having portable nitrous available, the lack of kindness, warmth and empathy from the midwife I had. As a result of this experience I have experienced PTSD requiring a year psychological input and antidepressant medication.