

Submission  
No 658

## INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

**Name:** Name suppressed

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Partially  
Confidential

The overall outcome of my birth was good, my baby and I were healthy and I am grateful for that, I acknowledge that so many women's experience are much genuinely traumatic than mine but it has still caused a stain in my memories and a huge increase in anxiety and stress as I navigate another pregnancy at the present time.

With my first child I presented to a post dates scan at 41w1d which revealed that my amniotic fluid was reduced, I was then sent to a post dates exam room where a doctor came in very briefly to talk to me about oligohydramnios, she performed a vaginal exam which was incredibly physically uncomfortable which caused some bleeding, and they couldn't provide me with any information regarding how "low" my amniotic fluid was let alone how long I had before things were dire.

This is during the covid epidemic so this is all occurring without the support of my husband. At this clinic i was told i would be induced and I was not allowed to go home, I argued this and they eventually they let me go home so i could try and relax, pack a hospital bag and told me to come back later that day. At this appointment the doctor did explain that i would be induced via the Foley balloon catheter - explained how the catheter works, and had me sign a consent form.

After being admitted, the foley catheter inserted just fine, at 4am the next morning I had a doctor who had come to do some rounds on the antenatal clinic at which I was now staying indefinitely - come and do a cervical/vaginal exam to see if my cervix had made any progress with the catheter, it was 4am, they had just woken me up, the exam was excruciatingly painful - I was in a lot of physical discomfort and crying while he did the exam. He was getting frustrated, my cervix was angled slightly toward the back which is not unusual and he said he could not ascertain whether my cervix had dilated enough to proceed to the next step of induction. Because he could not confirm or deny the progress/or lack of he said to me while i was bewildered, in pain, in the dark at 4am that if he can't get a proper feel of my cervix he was going to send me for a C-section - the way he said it was in a manner of frustration that I was almost misbehaving - it destroyed me. What women need to proceed in labour is to feel SAFE and relaxed but I had never felt more unsafe, and scared.

I was lucky that the midwife that had been attending on me clearly didn't agree with the doctors bedside manner and came to talk to me - we spoke about how the hospital is too quick to over medicalise labour - im my case because I'm not being fast enough for them. i spoke to her about how I intuitively felt i was going into labour naturally that weekend if i were not to be interfered with. She advocated for me and bought me more time. I was there for 3 days in total - walking around, trying to relax while confined to the antenatal clinic like a prisoner.

I eventually started having natural contractions but because I has the foley balloon they had to break my waters as standard- no one informed me of this prior to it needing to be done. Because my waters were broken artificially they had to give me to syntocin drip. This was not communicated to me at all prior to it needing to be done. the doctor only spoke to me about the insertion of the foley catheter when getting me to sign the consent for - I did not know i had signed consent for a raft of other associated procedures. I remember this clearly, and it caused unnecessary stress and and confusion when I was in labour.

Now that I am having my second child - my anxiety over inductions, bedside manner of doctors, exams, lack of information/consent and the cold rigidity of the hospital system is robbing me of the joy that should be upcoming birth. Instead I am heading into any appointments feeling preemptively defensive that I will need to push back on recommendations that are simply policy and that aren't tailored to my care needs.

Even now, two years later I am tempted to ask my current midwife if i can get a copy of the hospital noted from my previous labour/induction just so I can know which doctor is was that caused me such discomfort and "trauma" that morning at 4am when I was almost vulnerable.

I'm praying my current pregnancy will be a calmer experience. I already feel like as a woman - the birth right of being able to labour naturally and in a safe environment are beyond my reach at this point, I feel grief and I have yet to give birth to this child. We need to do better by woman for the sake of them - and their babies. It's not enough to get babies born to be convenient, at the expense of the mothers mental health. The hospital system is capable of providing care that allows not only a positive outcome for the baby but for the mother as well.