

**Submission
No 680**

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

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I was 24 and in labour with my first child during the height of covid. I went into labour at 2am on the 08/06/2020. I rang the hospital and my contractions weren't close enough to go in so was told to monitor it. As the time went on, the pain got worse and I my contractions still weren't close enough to go in after ringing a second time. It wasn't until my mother came to my house after driving three hours and immediately called an ambulance, letting them know she had three children and she could tell something was wrong. Because of covid restrictions, there was only one person allowed in the room which was the father. I went into the examination room and told the nurse I had a phobia dying while giving birth, it was biggest fear and I was told I was overreacting. They measured my dilation and it was only 1cm. The time was around 9:30am on 09/06/2020. At this point I was screaming in pain and was crying saying something was wrong and that I was overreacting with my pain because it was my first child and I wasn't dilated enough to give birth. I am have a very high pain tolerance and have been in for emergency surgery for an appendix removal and the pain I was in during my appendicitis did not even cause me to scream in pain. My mother-in-law tried talking to the nurses because she could hear me screaming from the hallway. I want to note that when I finally got to talk to my mother and mother-in-law they said the hospital was prepared to leave me like that for another 3 days. This is important to note.

Instead of the nurses taking my families and my own fears into account, they simply moved me into a private room because "I was stressing the other people out and was being too loud". When they measured me a second time I still had not dilated. The nurses started me on the gas to relieve the pain and after 4 tanks of gas nothing was working or relieving any pain. It was about midday on the 09/06/2020 and after measuring me a third time with no progress I was told that "I needed to calm down" because I was stressing the baby out and my partner was told he was not allowed to help me sit up or move because "I had to learn to do it on my own", the nurses kept brushing off my concerns because it was my first baby and they said that I was just overestimating how much pain I was actually in - and because I was not more than 1cm dilated that my labour must not have been causing enough pain for me to scream the way I was. By late afternoon a nurse told me that the fetus had gone into distress and they burst my waters. Instead of water, what exited my body was brown mucus which I was told was actually feces because the fetus was under immense distress. Still, Instead of taking me and my family seriously they left me alone.

I got my partner to try and get a doctor to check on me. The first doctor walked in without checking my charts and left in what seemed like under a minute. I was still not dilated more than 1cm. One of the nurses recommended that I should just start trying to push even though I was not dilated enough. At no point was a c-section discussed up till this point.

After hearing that suggestion I looked at my partner and remember telling him "If they make me push I'm going to die" he looked at me and said "I know". Feeling helpless and ignored we both started saying our goodbyes. That will be a moment I will never forget. I thought I was going to die as a result of being ignored about my pain and my concerns of something being wrong. They were forcing me to do something I did not consent to, and sitting in the room without my mother being allowed in was something I'll never forget

As a last ditch effort to get taken seriously, and at this point, save my life, my partner asked the doctor again to check my charts. It was about 9:50pm at night. When the second doctor came in and checked my chart, he commented the babies heart beat was over 200 beats per minute and mine had dropped to around 50 beats per minute. He said if we were not rushed into surgery we were both not far off dying. They gave me an epidural which was the first time I felt pain free during this whole process, after begging and screaming and crying I was finally out of pain. I was rushed into an emergency c-section and they found the baby at the top of my ribs "trying to claw its way out because there was no exit" (as quoted by one of the nurses) and with the cord wrapped around his neck. Because the baby was in such an odd spot and they had to cut through my appendix scar I have been left with irreparable nerve damage, life long chronic pain and also back pain from the epidural. I have experiences where I have lost feeling in both or one of my legs for hours at a time. I am left in such unbearable pain that if I try going to the gym, eating too many meals in a day or even doing nothing I am left such excruciating pain I cannot even stand straight.

Thankfully my baby was born healthy.

After giving birth I was left so traumatised by the experience it left me with bad post natal depression and it took me 6 months to build a bond with my baby. Those months I will never get back and I believe if I was treated with more care and attention that things would have been different.

I have been left with so many scars, physically and emotionally, that I will never ever risk having another child again in fear of not being able to have my autonomy taken seriously and dying because of mistreatment.

I hope that by telling my story it can create change in the system and the way mothers are treated when pregnant and giving birth.