

Submission
No 685

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

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Partially
Confidential

I experienced birth trauma.

I gave birth to my daughter at _____ Hospital in April 2010. My labour was 55 hours. The first part was at home, the next part at a birthing centre and the final part in hospital.

There was never an emergency and I had incredible care with midwives and a doula. My obstetrician was exceptional. The trauma began after my daughter was born. She was born with the aid of forceps in theatre while I was prepped for a caesar. She was taken from me immediately after being held in the air to show me she was ok. I wasn't allowed to hold her due to the epidural, I was told later that I needed to have employed a midwife separately to be able to hold my baby after birth with an epidural. I had a midwife that worked at the hospital but she wasn't allowed in to theatre.

My partner had a quick hold of my baby and tried to bring her close to me but the anaesthetist kept getting in the way with medical equipment. The anaesthetist kept pumping me with drugs that I did not consent to and when I did ask what I was being given (after the 3rd jab into the cannula) he just said I had to have antibiotics as I had an episiotomy.

I was taken to recovery, I have no idea where my baby was taken. Recovery was a large open space with people everywhere and nurses poking me left right and centre. Checking things but never telling me what was going on or when I could see my child. All I remember was them saying is that I had to have no numbness in my body for me to be able to hold her. So I waited and waited for the epidural to wear off, I have no idea where my daughter was during this time. I was scared, a first time mum. Nobody explained any processes apart from poking me to check numbness. I was exhausted in a very busy room. I asked where my placenta was and had been told it had been thrown out accidentally. It had been requested when I got to hospital I that I wanted it kept.

My daughter was finally brought to me, wrapped in a blanket. The nurses were all over me, telling me how to hold her, moving her around. Babies know what to do here, no help required thanks! One nurse or midwife was squeezing my nipples to start the feeding process. My daughter was calm and did not need 'help'. I still shudder to this day thinking about those nipple squeezes. It felt like torture and abuse. I had been awake for 3 days, couldn't hold my child and now that I had her I had some stranger squeezing my nipples. I couldn't wait to get out of that crazy place.

A nurse then approached me with a mobile phone to say it was my ob/gyn on the phone. I was still in recovery at this stage. He told me that a swab had been left in me in theatre and that they would have to x ray me to check it was there. I said surely there is only one place it could be, why the need of an x ray? Hospital policy apparently. My baby was taken away again, I was x rayed, swab was seen then I had to go through the procedure of a different

nurse coming to tell me what had happened and what was going to be done to remove it. This felt like forever and all I wanted to do was hold my baby.

We finally got a room and had our first peace and quiet with our daughter. It was heaven. I had a shower then got back to bed. We'd only been in the room a short time when someone new came in. She told us that while in theatre one of the nurses didn't have protective eyewear on and when they gave me an episiotomy my blood had squirted in her eye. Because of this I had to have bloods taken to check for any diseases for the sake of the nurse. I was incredulous. I understood the policy for taking bloods but after everything that had happened I couldn't believe I then had to have bloods taken. My body was wrecked and exhausted.

Not being able to hold my baby after birth, my placenta being thrown out, the swab being left in me, x ray, blood test, strangers squeezing my nipples, it was all too much and I couldn't wait to get the hell out of hospital. Thankfully we were only there 5 hours after the birth and went back to the birthing centre where we were nurtured and cared for as a family for a week. It was bliss and I am so thankful for the care I had there from my midwife and doula.

Birth trauma is rife and something needs to be done about this. I am thankful there is a parliamentary enquiry into this, it's WELL overdue!