

Submission
No 689

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

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Partially
Confidential

On the 24th December 2019 I gave birth to my son at hospital.

I went into spontaneous preterm labour and my son was born at 34wks 6 days. Despite his early arrival he was beautiful and healthy and needed no intervention post birth and we had a short hospital stay to gain weight and treat bilirubin levels.

My labour started with the spontaneous rupture of my membranes so I presented to my local hospital with labour progressing very quickly. They sent me via ambulance to Hospital and on arrival I was checked by a midwife and doctor. They didn't check how dilated I was "in case my membranes had ruptured" to avoid infection. The language used was very doubtful that I was actually in labour and they questioned me multiple times about how I knew my waters broke and it wasn't just bladder leakage. They hooked me up to monitor contractions but for some reason it didn't show them, leading to them being even more dismissive of me.

I was left in the room with a quick check in ever now and again, usually with something said like "we will give her a bit more time to see if it's real labour". In hindsight I'm glad I was left alone with my husband to labour in a consult room on the floor because if they had have believed me or had the 'machines' telling them what I was telling them (that I was in labour) who knows what kind of intervention might have taken place.

Instead I got myself as comfortable as I could and my husband and I put to work what we'd learned in our hypnobirthing course. It was an amazing experience and not interfered with (only thanks to being dismissed if they had believed me who knows how much interference there would have been).

Finally at the end of my labour they came in and told me a birth suite was finally available and they'd get me in there to check what was happening. They asked to sit in the wheelchair to which I said I couldn't sit down. Annoyed at me they showed me to the birth suite as I had to walk down the hallway with my babies head crowning. Again, annoyance as I said I couldn't get up on the bed (hard to do with a head crowning). All I felt was frustration from them and like I was an inconvenience. As I lay on my back the midwife exclaimed "oh there's a head there! Call the doctor".

I went on to birth my baby using my own intuition and guidance from what I'd learned in the hypnobirthing course and didn't push when I was being yelled at to "push, push, push".

After my baby was born, I advocated for skin to skin after he was cleared to be breathing and healthy. Because he was preterm they told me he had to now go to the nursery. In hindsight they probably wanted the birth suite vacated and I could have had more than 5 minutes bonding with my happy, healthy baby. I told my husband to go with him and do skin to skin at the nursery with him, he now had the important job of advocating for our son. Little did I know my experience was far from over and I needed someone to advocate for/protect me from what was to come.

I asked for a natural 3rd stage to deliver my placenta and I think the midwife was so astounded by the labour and delivery she obliged. Unfortunately I had a postpartum haemorrhage and lost 800mls of blood so the dr was called. As she entered the room she was briefed to what was happening. She yelled at the midwife for approving a natural 3rd stage and then turned

to me and started yelling at me. She conducted herself in an appalling manner, slamming things and stomping around, yelling at the midwives to get her things and then yelling at me "there is nothing natural about a premature birth so what makes you think a natural 3rd stage is ok". Im not sure what she calls going into labour naturally, labouring naturally and birthing naturally.

She then gave me the Syntocin shot and began fundal massage. I would not even remotely call what is done a massage, it is invasive and aggressive (or maybe I was just receiving the doctors obvious anger). She then asked one of the midwives to continue as she went down and began pulling my placenta out. I have never experienced pain like it and involuntarily pushed her away, she told me to sit back again so I did but told her I wanted her to stop. She pulled again and the pain had me trying to get away. The doctor then had 4 people hold me down, I had someone on each and and leg and hold me down so I couldn't move. At this point I'd had no drugs, no pain relief and she tore my placenta out of me while I was held down begging them to stop touching me.

This experience still plays over with me but it really came back to affect me when I fell pregnant with my second son. I didn't realise how deeply it had effected me until I experienced fear and anxiety in the lead up to birth. I brought the experience up during my prenatal visits and expressed my fear and anxiety.

I birthed my second son naturally and opted for the pintocin shot, anything to escape a repeat of the first time. It wasn't until it came time to delivering the placenta that I realised how traumatised I was, they gave me the shot and I kept confirming that if I said "stop" that they would stop. They promised me they wouldn't do anything I didn't want. They gave my cord a light tug and that was enough to have me saying stop. Not because it hurt but all the fear came back completely overwhelming me. I'd just been through natural childbirth so calm and focused and it was the thought of delivering the placenta that had me unravel.

The beautiful Doctor I had came over seeing the panic and tears, she told me "no one will touch you and I'll guide you through delivering your own placenta" she showed me where to push on my stomach and as I did told me to push. Just like that my placenta was delivered fast, pain free and in my control. I started crying and said "thank you so much" the relief from the fear and panic I was in had me shaking and sobbing uncontrollably. I didn't realise how deeply traumatised I was until that point.

Thank you for your time, I hope this helps woman to never have the experience I had.