

Submission  
No 691

## INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

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Partially  
Confidential

On June 6th 2022, I suffered from an early term miscarriage and waited almost 3 weeks before I was scheduled for a D&C at the local Hospital.

The surgery was continuously not scheduled by the hospital during the 3 week period even though I expressed great desire for the surgery as I was informed by the pregnancy care team at the hospital that this would be the least painful option (the other option being that I take medication that induces contractions and I pass the fetal tissue at home with minor painkillers prescribed such as panadol and ibuprofen)

During the 3 weeks that I was waiting for surgery, I was advised to watch for any profuse bleeding, and to take panadol and ibuprofen for the pain. There was no discussion of my mental health at the time and no support given by the pregnancy care team in any way other than an initial appointment to tell me these options. I experienced painful contractions constantly throughout this time period, and though I tried to seek help from my GP, they did not advise me to go to the emergency department at any stage despite the pain I was in.

My D&C was performed on the 24th June 2022. I was asked to arrive at 10:30am, and after covid testing, I was walked through to the day surgery waiting area with my mum attending for support. I was handed my gown and asked to change, not given any underwear to change in to. I stated that I was still bleeding, and the nurse gave me a sanitary pad and some underwear for my stay. At this point I became quite emotional as I was still coming to terms with the fact I had miscarried and was finally getting the surgery I had waited for, without having any information beforehand to help with the anxiety of anticipating the surgery.

I sat in the day surgery waiting area with atleast 3 other patients, and nothing but a thin curtain to give me some privacy while I grieved. I was given a chair to sit in while I waited and given no information about when my surgery would be, other than that I had to wait until the surgeon was finished in the emergency department. I waited over 6 hours for my surgery, with fasting as a requirement, and was only offered a pillow and a blanket after my mum asked several times for them. I suffer from chronic back pain and sciatica and sitting in the chair became extremely painful after an hour, with only limited extension to the armchair, I had no option but to try and sleep. The nurses would push my curtain back constantly as they walked through to access the bookshelf next to my chair.

When the surgery finally started, I was surrounded by males in the operating room. There wasn't a female in sight. My mum wasn't allowed into the room either. As someone who suffers from anxiety and has been sexually assaulted in the past, this made me extremely distressed.

I was informed the surgery went without complications and was prescribed endone for the pain. I was advised to seek medical help from the emergency department if I started bleeding profusely or experienced chest pain.

I started experiencing quite severe chest pain by the afternoon of June 25th 2022, and presented at the emergency department that night. After checking in with the front staff, I waited approximately an hour before I was seen by the triage nurse, when an ECG was

performed another 30 minutes or so later. The ECG was clear and I was told to sit and wait in the main waiting room. I was not given any pain relief and I continued to experience severe chest pain while I waited. I am not sure how long I ended up sitting there for, but after a while I lost my patience and asked the nurse at the front desk how long it would be before I would be seen again and reported that I was still experiencing the chest pain and had just had surgery the day before - something I had already informed her when I first checked in. The nurse told me to calm down and that unfortunately there was a large wait due to several emergencies that were more important. I decided to leave emergency and went home as it was quite late at night and my sciatica was flaring up and I could no longer sit down or stand and there was no where to lay down.

I presented at emergency the following day with the same chest pain. I waited several hours before I was seen by a doctor, who told me I 'may have mild myocarditis and to go home and take ibuprofen and it should go away'. I asked if there was anything else that could be done and the doctor stated I could 'wait a few more hours for blood test results if I wanted to'

I chose to go home and suffered with the chest pain for at least 7 days after the surgery before it subsided. After the distress I had been through already, I felt hopeless and felt I could no longer trust the medical advice at the Hospital.

I still find it extremely difficult to seek medical help from this hospital because of this experience, and even going to a GP or being in any form of medical environment is very anxiety provoking for me now.

The pregnancy care team at the hospital did not follow up at all, even after I requested a social worker appointment due to my mental health after the miscarriage. I called the team several months later to ask when the social worker would call me, to be informed that a referral to the social worker had never been made despite my request. I asked to be referred again and waited a month before being contacted over the phone unexpectedly. The phone conversation went for less than 15 minutes, and despite me asking for further support, the social worker decided I was supported enough as she had put a referral through to the mental health team already.

The mental health team at the hospital were extremely cold and apathetic towards me during the phone calls and face to face interview, interrupting me while I was talking, telling me I should 'go for a walk' while I'm seeking support during a crisis and told I should seek support with a psychologist, without realising that I haven't been able to get an appointment.

In a time of distress, I was relying on the public health system in my local area to support me, but instead I was constantly treated like my health wasn't important, my pain was insignificant and that I was being a burden for simply presenting to emergency.

Now, just over a year later and there has been no follow up from the pregnancy care team or mental health care team, and I've lost faith in their ability to help me anyway.