

Submission
No 698

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

It was my first pregnancy and my baby was due in April 2018. It was a beautiful pregnancy with no complications. I was completely pressured into an induction just because my baby was not here on her estimated due date. I called the hospital to cancel my induction but then was further pressured by the midwife saying if you don't come in now, we will be full and can't help you.

I wasn't provided any information about why an induction was necessary. I was induced with cervadil and my cervix was so hard and closed that it hurt so much and they took a long time to get it in. This forced my baby into labour and led to my baby being distressed and her heart rate not recovering after contractions. The team were concerned for her health and I had to have an emergency caesarean.

After this birth, I had no time to grieve the loss of the birth I wanted, I was trying to care for a newborn after major abdominal surgery.

For this birth my messages are this:

- Give women the power back to trust in their own bodies
- Stop inducing women for no medical reason. The statistics all around the world show the rate of emergency c sections after an induction
- Provide education to women about the risks of inductions
- Provide information to women after the future complications of caesareans
such as bowel/bladder adhesions, uterus trauma and increased risks of adenomyosis
- Ensure all midwives and obstetricians receive up to date education and training about .natural births, risks of induction.
- change the model that the inductions help hospitals be able to plan for births better knowing patient numbers etc - birth is not a process that should fit into a hospital/government structure.
- share with women the reason why inductions were introduced in the first place - to decrease the still born rate, but that the rates still haven't changed, inductions have not 'fixed' that.
- Stop doing cervical checks, especially before a woman is even in labour. The cervix can change at any time, and a closed high cervix is closed and high for a reason. Leave it alone to do its thing.
- Leave a woman's body alone to do what it was built for.
- Studies have found that two special proteins (SRC-1 and SRC-2) are released from the baby's lungs into the amniotic fluid just before the beginning of labor. This causes an inflammatory response in the uterus that sends labor signals to the mother's brain. Are health professionals aware of this?

- Estimated due dates are exactly that ESTIMATED. No one is actually sure that the due date estimator that was developed was meant to be calculated from the first day or last day of the woman's period. It is also based on a woman who has a 28 day cycle and ovulates on day 14. I did not have a 28 day cycle and I never ovulated on day 14. This due date is what leads to inductions! Remind women that it is ESTIMATED!! You baby is not overdue after this date!!

From the birth onwards I began to do my research about inductions and unnecessary interventions. I knew for my second baby that I wanted to have a VBAC. I joined VBAC support groups and when I fell pregnant in 2020, I booked in an obstetrician who was VBAC supportive. Although I will mentioned that she raised the caesarean option as the safer option after a c section. I cancelled her service, but we had a long talk and I ended up staying with her.

When I went into labour and arrived at the hospital and said I was having a VBAC, the team who met us at the door rolled their eyes.

Through my labour I had to have the fetal monitor on so they could ensure there was no uterine rupture. My obstetrician was delivering another baby and the midwife on duty asked if she could check my cervix. I said no, that I would wait for my obstetrician. She then told me that she was trained and does a lot of my obstetricians checks. So I consented. Whilst she was checking me she then said, I'm just stretching your cervix. I screamed at her to get her hand out of me and said I did not consent to that. I was devastated that she had violated me and potentially manipulated my labour that would end in another caesarean. I made a formal complaint to the hospital afterwards.

My birth ended up being a calm and peaceful birth, my son came out calm and has been a very calm baby. My daughter who was ripped out of my bely, came out screaming, and is a lot more emotional that my son. I believe my baby girl experienced her own birth trauma, being forced out of my body when she wasn't ready.

My messages from my VBAC are:

- provide correct information to women about VBAC. This 2% risk of uterine rupture is bullshit. Firstly, the study was done on women who were induced with syntocin. A drug that causes hyperstimulation of the uterus and extreme contractions. So the uterine rupture risk was a lot higher for those women! Women who are attempting a VBAC should not be induced with drugs like that. Also, the 2% statistic of the uterine rupture is not actually for catastrophic uterine ruptures, it includes tiny and insignificant tears and windows. This information needs to be shared, not the scare tactic that health professionals use to scare women out of having a VBAC.

- Provide the benefits of a VBAC such as faster recovery, bonding and breastfeeding, benefits to the baby of a vaginal birth.

- hospitals shouldn't get money incentives for cesarean births

- train health professionals about the true statistic of uterine rupture and train them how to empower women to trust their bodies

- how fetal monitoring can actually interrupt the birth process and that women need to be left alone in a safe place to birth.

- fetal monitoring should not be in a hospitals policy for a VBAC

My firstborn is now 5.5 and I still grieve what both her and I lost. I feel guilty that I allowed my body to be manipulated into labour and the cascade of interventions that followed caused my baby girl to have a traumatic birth. A birth that she was not ready for, a birth that she did not deserve.

If I had known then, what I know now, I would have told everyone to go to hell and waited with eager patience for my baby to tell me when she was ready to be born.