

**Submission  
No 703**

## **INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA**

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I received disrespectful and inappropriate treatment during my pregnancy twice - once in my first trimester and again just before I gave birth.

I was ignored and dismissed when I presented to emergency at 8 weeks pregnant with a suspected miscarriage and appendicitis. I had already been there that week, with similar symptoms, and had a positive ultrasound and blood tests. But bleeding was heavy and pain was unbearable. The doctor assigned to me not only lacked compassion to the circumstance but also failed to follow necessary procedure. Despite asking multiple times, he denied my requests for an ultrasound, declared that I had had a miscarriage and asked me to wait in the waiting room (after already being there for 8 hours) while I continued to bleed heavily so that he could confirm my blood type via a test - something that had been done by the same hospital just 2 days earlier.

When I presented to the hospital the following day, after grieving my second lost baby, I demanded an ultrasound. After fighting for my rights for over an hour, the sonographer agreed to do an ultrasound to 'confirm if there was any foetal matter left in my uterus' - only to find a strong heartbeat and appendicitis. I was rushed to emergency again, and underwent surgery 6 hours later.

Due to this occurrence, I was later told that I would not qualify for the Midwife Group Practice, despite no indication that my health was in any other still impaired.

Finally, when I got to the later stages of my pregnancy, I was told that my baby was measuring small and was breeched. I was encouraged to have twice-weekly check-ups - CTG and ultrasounds.

During this time, I felt pressured to have a c-section multiple times and told repeatedly that my baby 'wouldn't survive a natural birth'. I wasn't given evidence based, unbiased information to make informed choices before my birth which made me question my body's ability and the instincts my baby and I were safe and healthy.

I finally agreed to have an ECV - during which I experienced more inappropriate behaviour from the doctors. I asked the obstetrician many questions about the procedure and her ability to perform it. They started to insert a cannula into my hand without explanation, and when I asked why they said they needed to take blood to prepare for an emergency c-section - something that I had not been made aware of.

When the time for the ECV came, the doctor who I had built a relationship with immediately handed over to her student doctor to do the procedure, again without my consent. I felt like they made decisions for me, without any conversation despite me being there the whole time.

Overall my birth experience was empowering, purely because I listened to my own gut instincts and the recommendations of home birth midwife. I hope that more publicly funded home births become available as I believe that birthing at home was the reason I had a successful, calm and empowering birth.

I believe there should be greater support for women throughout their pregnancy, birthing and mothering journey - both financially and emotionally. There needs to be improved education and support for pregnancy loss and a greater capacity for doctors to listen to mothers - they really do know best.