

Submission
No 874

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

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Partially
Confidential

Hi,

I would like to submit my submission to the inquiry into birth trauma. Thank you for taking the time to read this.

I delivered my son, _____, in 2020 when I was 28 years old, at _____ Private Hospital. This marked my first birthing experience. At the time, I was in the military and fortunate to have access to an obstetrician during my pregnancy, along with women's physiotherapy. However, I felt a lack of comprehensive information throughout my pregnancy, which was exacerbated by the challenges posed by the COVID pandemic. Medical appointments felt rushed and clinical due to the circumstances.

Around the 30-week mark, I developed pubic symphysis dysfunction, which made walking difficult and caused significant pain towards the end of my pregnancy. I underwent women's physiotherapy in response to this condition. When I went into labor, my regular obstetrician was on leave, resulting in the care of an unfamiliar OB. I arrived at the hospital with rapidly progressing contractions and requested an epidural, which was promptly administered. Unfortunately, the epidural dislodged from my spinal cavity, causing my contractions to intensify again. It required the return of the on-call anesthetist to provide a second epidural.

After this, I began pushing when I was 8cm dilated. However, my baby's position caused complications, leading to a drop in my blood pressure and fluctuations in the baby's heart rate. Given these concerns, forceps were necessary for delivery. In a state of exhaustion, I underwent an episiotomy, and the forceps were used to bring my son into the world. The forceps caused significant bruising, a cut, and swelling on his face, as well as a cephalohematoma on his skull.

Due to the facial injuries, my son required special care in the nursery, preventing immediate bonding and breastfeeding. Following childbirth, I experienced difficulty delivering the placenta, resulting in hemorrhaging and an emergency trip to the operating room. This separation from my newborn lasted for 13 hours, as I needed time to regain my ability to walk before being reunited with him.

Though I was eventually able to breastfeed and found some solace in this connection, my post-partum experience was far from smooth. I battled disturbing dreams and heightened sensitivity to stimuli for the first few weeks. Physical issues emerged as well, including loss of bladder control and an inability to sense the urge to urinate due to nerve damage from the forceps. My pelvic floor sustained severe scar tissue damage, and despite seeking aftercare physiotherapy, the relief was limited. I could not have intercourse with my husband due to pain during which persisted for over a year, ultimately requiring pelvic floor botox treatment.

Despite having top-tier healthcare coverage through my military service, I feel that I encountered various shortcomings in my birthing journey. Key procedures were unfamiliar to me, like instrumental delivery, and I felt compelled into a stretch and sweep at 38 weeks without a comprehensive explanation. The pandemic further hindered access to educational resources and support networks, leaving me feeling isolated and uninformed.

While I did reach out to available mental health resources, my journey towards healing has been ongoing. The trauma associated with childbirth has left an indelible mark. Submissions and speaking out about my experience are essential steps in addressing the issues, yet they can't erase the trauma I carry. The sight of newborns and discussions on birth trauma continue to trigger deep emotional responses within me. Despite my resilience, anxiety medication remains a necessity, and the prospect of another pregnancy is fraught with fear. This submission is a significant step, yet it is only one part of a larger process of recovery.

Thank you,

Tika Goddard