

Submission  
No 875

## INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

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Partially  
Confidential

Hello, my name's Alicia Schofield and I'm currently turning 30 I was 26 when I fell pregnant and 27 1/2 when I gave birth, I did all my appointments with [redacted] hospital but gave birth in [redacted], well, I guess this is my experience with pregnancy and birth.

I guess I don't have to go into detail on how my baby was conceived haha, but I guess it starts on the 19th of August 2020 when I decide to pee on a pregnancy test all because I had very sore boobs. Turns out I was pregnant and just 4 weeks and 2 days. I had a rush of emotions flow over me, mainly excitement, but also very scared of the unknown, because this was not my first pregnancy, I had one previous where the baby didn't make it past 8 weeks and I had what was called a missed miscarriage. Where my baby passed on a Wednesday and my body didn't tell me till Sunday. That Sunday was mother's day 2019, that had an overwhelming amount of pain behind it and I didn't want to look at that day the same again. But I'm not here to speak about that one. As I had automatic flash backs I got scared, I didn't know what to do, so I called my best friend Natalie, where we talked for a long time and we were both very excited and happy with the news, I knew I had to take day by day. The next morning I got up and went to work, thinking about everything and what to do next, I called [redacted], the baby's father and told him we needed to talk when we got home, he freaked out as we hadn't been in the greatest state, our relationship was very up and down prior to this and I wasn't sure how he would react. After my first miscarriage our relationship fell apart, and I didn't know what to do. So I felt I was treading on eggshells and told him, he wasn't scared or sad, he was surprised and ok, which was normal for him, he isn't one to express his emotions. I got home and showed him and we talked a lot. What was to follow, was not what we expected.

As soon as the 5th week hit, the morning sickness hit me, and hit me hard, I wasn't just throwing up in the morning it was all day and night, waking up in the middle of the night to throw up. I thought it was just the first trimester, boy was I wrong. Who knew a baby could do this to me.

I continued to work through all this and start my pregnancy journey, got all the test and had a dating scan booked. Problem one, 14th September 2020 I collapsed and got myself to a hospital and ended up having my first scan, I collapsed due to dehydration from me throwing up so much.

I seen the baby's heart beat and I was so happy. After this there was nothing substantial besides me getting sick every day and continuing to work and go to my scheduled appointments, keep in mind this was the middle of the pandemic, it was a bit lonely. I did struggle not being able to have my partner with me. I had the 18 week scan and the radiologist told me all was well, nothing was wrong with our baby. We got the gender, I passed it on to my best friend who organised my balloon and on the 20th week we found out we were having a little girl! I was so excited, [redacted] wasn't but we know how some parents are. She grew on him though. My problems started the next day, I had a pain in my lower right groin side, I was admitted and they told me it was an appendicitis, I was in hospital for 5 days and it seemed to have disappeared and I was discharged. After this I had a few more tests and everything was fine but due to me being in hospital and not being well from vomiting I ended up losing my job. They told me that I should stay home and look after my unborn child and that I wouldn't be getting any shifts. This was really hard in the middle of a pandemic as I wasn't receiving any assistance. At the 28th week I started to have chest pains and I went into emergency, unfortunately no one was able to diagnose me or help me with my pain. I just had to put up with it. That's what I was told, I was checked for blood clots, and cleared so I

was sent on my way but with no relief and no understanding of what I was dealing with. I went to all my other scheduled appointments again. My baby girl was fine. Nothing to worry about they all said. At the 32nd week I went back in with the same chest pain and someone was able to sort of. Give me an understanding that my daughter had put her feet underneath my rib cage and was pulling the ribs from the cartilage, it's very similar to Costochondritis, so that's what they told me I had and were unable to help me, but because the same symptoms were the same as me throwing a clot I was to come in every single time I had a flare up. This resulted in me attending the emergency room on multiple occasions. Every single time I was sent away with nothing but them just checking if I had a clot. The doctor that diagnosed me on the 32nd week was also a doctor in the maternity ward/unit she told me that I could have my baby early if the pain was getting worse and it becoming unbearable. I never got to see this doctor again, I went to see all my midwife appointments and no one was helping me, no one helped me with a plan or an idea of what would happen or when it would happen. It was the 38th week and I was at my last appointment and I had bumped into the doctor who diagnosed me at the 32nd week. She was very surprised to see that I was still pregnant, she ended up seeing me and we made a plan, this plan was to hopefully organise a c-section and get my daughter out as soon as possible, she called up to see if we could go in the next day. They said unfortunately they were booked out, this meant that I would be induced on Monday which was 4 days away. I told her that was fine and if we followed the plan that she had made everything would be okay. The plan was for me to come in be induced with the tape, and then I was able to stay in the hospital with my partner and if nothing had happened by 8:00 p.m. he would go home and when everything kicked off, He would be allowed back in and be there for the birth. Late Sunday night early Monday morning I woke up and I started having contractions, I timed them and made sure that this was not Braxton Hicks, it was consistent but they were just still too far apart. I wasn't able to sleep. I was just in a lot of pain due to my chest and now the contractions. In the morning we packed everything that we thought we needed jumped in the car and went down to Hospital, this is where all my appointments have been. Every emergency visit as well. I arrived and the doctor that was supposed to be there wasn't there, I had received another doctor and this doctor was not professional at all, she didn't care about my plan. She told me that she doesn't care about what the other doctor said its it what she says. I ended up being induced and then told to go home. I explained to her what the plan was and she completely dismissed it, The nurses tried their best but were unable to get me a bed. I left feeling very defeated, deflated and extremely angry. My partner took me out to get something to eat and then we went home, I couldn't stop crying because the contractions were getting closer together and I was too afraid to call the hospital and just be told "no put up with it." I then went to my mother's and tried to keep active and moving, I was still timing the contractions and then my mum decided to call her friend whose daughter is a midwife at Hospital, her daughter was on night shift and she woke her up just to speak to me. I explained what happened and she told me to get down to and she will sort it all out. So we left and by the time we got to Hospital the contractions were a lot closer together, they took me in straight away with no hesitation and made me feel very comfortable, arrived not long after we did and everything had already started. She called ahead and let her colleagues know I was coming in. She helped me all night. I ended up getting an epidural because I just couldn't bear the pain in my chest and the contractions at the same time. They checked me at 9:00 p.m. and I was 4 cm dilated, unfortunately I was still throwing up at this point and all through the pregnancy. I had ended up throwing up so hard. I passed out for an hour, it was the only hour I got to sleep. Around

6:00 in the morning everything started to move again and it looked like my daughter was in distress, so they did a little prick test to check her blood and it said that she wasn't. The doctors were doing their last check for the night shift around 8:45 am. He came in and explained that I was still four cm, maybe four and a half and because I hadn't moved too much it may look like I was going to have to have a c-section, I wasn't opposed to this and was fine. Told him get me the paperwork and I'll sign it. I was very exhausted by this point from being up from Sunday night and it's now Tuesday morning. The labour had taken a lot out of me and I kind of just wanted to get her out. As the shift changed happened, I ended up dilating by 5 cm and was at 9 cm. I felt a heavy drop and kept asking the new midwife to check me. She said that she couldn't do it because they had just checked me and she was just training. I told her please go and get someone that will do it because I'm positive I am going to start pushing soon. She was very hesitant and wasn't sure what to do and I just told her. Please go get someone that will help me. Another midwife came in and checked me and said yes, You are 9 1/2 cm.                    had just left and finished her shift at 9:00. This was about 9:05am, because the doctor said nothing was going to happen and will probably do a c-section. He left the room to go get his tablets and inform the rest of the family that nothing was happening, by the time he can back there was about 6 midwives in the room and two doctors standing at the door. All I can remember was the doctors yelling stop. Don't let her push the babies in distress, that the cord is more likely around a part of her body. They wanted to use forceps and I just turned around and said no one is touching me. No one is doing this. I'm getting my baby out now. And I looked at the midwife and she turned my epidural off earlier so now I could feel my contractions. I knew when to push and she helped me do it too, I didn't yell, I didn't scream. I was just determined to get my daughter out, and with about five pushes,                    was holding our daughter and then placing her on my chest, she had the umbilical cord around her neck and torso but it was very loose. At this moment you probably thinking there's not a lot of trauma behind this, but I haven't got there yet.

We loved every minute every second we had with our baby, we still do, but then noticed something very strange and odd about our baby, our daughter was born with a half a golf ball size lump on her lower spine on her back. We asked the midwife what was that and she wasn't sure. She then went out of the room and came back in and called a paediatrician to come down and see our daughter, she said we were very adamant and wanted someone to come check the baby now. We waited about 2 hours and then a doctor came in and had a look, felt around and did a few normal checks, she wasn't quite sure and said she hadn't seen this before, started to stress me out a lot, All I wanted to do was feed my baby and spend some time with me, her and her dad. But everything felt that I couldn't have that peace of mind. We didn't get answers and we were left in the dark, we were moved to a ward, and had a follow-up consultation that afternoon, they thought the lump was full of fluid so they told me my baby couldn't sleep on her back, she couldn't be wrapped and she needed to be held the whole time just so that lump didn't burst and paralysed her. So for 5 days my daughter slept on top of me, her father was not allowed to stay. He could only come during the day and had to go at a certain time due to COVID rules, this took an extreme toll on me and I was stressing about my milk because I wanted to breastfeed. I tried everything to get my daughter to latch but she just wasn't latching, The nurses gave me a pump and I started to express my milk and get as much milk as I could out for her. I was determined to at least give her something while she was like this. We ended up getting an MRI and the weekend paediatrician who happened to be my paediatrician when I was a baby came in and informed me that my daughter was born with what was called Lipomyelomeningocele also known

as spina bifida, I had never heard of this, by this point I was extremely sleep deprived, the person next to me was having four visitors when you're only supposed to have one, I was angry and upset and all my hormones were going crazy. I didn't know what to do and I felt that I had failed my daughter in being able to let her be normal. We eventually got discharged after a week in hospital, My partner bought me a pump and took me home with our daughter. The first night we just switched between ourselves and had her sleep on us. One stayed awake and the other went to sleep, we had a follow-up with the hospital but it was pretty useless, we didn't get much help from it. I did however have a follow-up with the paediatrician who said he was happy to My daughter on but to know that he was retiring in 5 years. I was fine with this, I also got a home nurse to come and check in on me, I told her my story and she couldn't believe it. She was crying. She asked me if I would be happy to let her stay on this journey for as long as she could because she'd like to learn about what my daughter has. I told her of course it's really nice to have someone with me and by my side. My daughter is now 2 years and 3 months.

She has had a deteathering operation of the S1 and S2 at the age of 14 weeks, she has a newer genetic bladder, I have to catheterize her three times a day with an in out catheter, she has to have daily medication for prophylactic care (prevention of UTIs), she's had four UTIs so far, she has duplex kidney syndrome, she had grade three reflux in her kidneys, you had reflux to her milk, she has clawed toes on her left foot, left leg and foot are shorter and smaller than her right, she doesn't have plantar flexion in the left foot, she had hip dysplasia, and now she's having issues in her right hip so they think her L5 and L4 are affected. Her spine is open and the nerves are exposed, There is a fatty component around the nerves that are pulling at them, these have damaged nerves and these are the things that have affected her. The trauma of this birth and the fact that there could have been a chance that this could have been detected while she was inside of me could have changed so many outcomes. I am financially in trouble, I cannot hold down a normal job, I have 9 appointments alone this month for my daughter, imagine trying to tell your employer that you have to have nine days off. I work two jobs, juggle every medical appointment, I get no support from the government except the child care subsidy, and carers allowance which is 144 of fortnite, I was rejected by NDIS, I applied again and got it a second time, that has been a 9-month process. I have to see a psychologist every month and they genuinely don't know how I do this, I don't know how I do this, There is so much more I could sit down and write. But the more I write the more i get emotional and the more it hurts. I just want the best for my little one, hence, most of the time I feel like I'm a failure of a mother, I didn't do it right, All I want to do is do it right. Just right for her and by her.

So I really hope with whatever you're going to do with this information, you were able to make a change and you are able to do right by everyone. Not just Mum's but by the babies that are now affected as well. The children that are completely innocent in all of this and don't deserve any part of it. I hope you succeed and what you do. Thank you for reading my story.

To answer your questions

What would have made a difference ? Well I understand it was a pandemic, but I felt like people forgot we were human, I was alone, I did this alone, I had no comfort, I wanted love and care and felt none I felt alone and scared. What would have made a difference is if people remembered we are human. That understanding is important, way more important, listening to the needs of the person giving birth is more important.

I wasn't able to choose my care, I had a plan and doctor at \_\_\_\_\_ completely disregarded me and it, I didn't even get a call to ask where I was or why I hadn't come back.

Yes, in perinatal period I felt all of the above, I felt that everything was rushed, that I didn't get enough time or attention, my daughters condition could have been detected and it wasn't. Being told all if fine and she's healthy when she wasn't is so traumatic. I want to tell at the people who missed this, for rushing, for missing this.

I don't feel I was violated no, I had a good doctor and fantastic midwife at the night shift at \_\_\_\_\_

No I wasn't informed much, I got told all is fine nothing to worry about.

I'm still dealing with it, and I had help from my nurse, I guess I have my own psychologist, but I feel if I had more help Understanding all this id be better, maybe a group, not a big one, a small one, just something to help

As I said in my experience, I can not get a normal job, I'm to scared to have another baby and how I'll be able to balance it all, I'm scared, and I don't feel complete, I want another but I feel I can't. My partner and I sex life is non existent because he doesn't want me to get pregnant again either. Emotionally I feel I'm not here and not the same.

I hope this all helps.

My name's Alicia Schofield, I live in \_\_\_\_\_, my life has drastically changed due to the birth of my daughter, my daughters name is \_\_\_\_\_. This is my life. I hope we can help you. Please reach out if you want to know more.

Thank you and good luck.

Kindest regards

Alicia Schofield