

Submission
No 720

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

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Partially
Confidential

In November 2022 I gave birth at Private Hospital. What was meant to be a happy even meeting our baby did not go as I wanted. During my labour I was subject to being dismissed by my anaesthetist on multiple occasions. The worst moment for me was after about 4 hours of labour I found my contractions to be too painful and so I asked for an epidural. Having an epidural was already my biggest fear in childbirth so I wanted to use it as my last option. When the anaesthetist arrived my midwives positioned me on the bed ready for the epidural. Eventually 2 hours went by and 2 failed attempts of an epidural had happened. I was hunched over on the bed crying my eyes out while my partner wiped my tears away because my anaesthetist wouldn't let me move.

On both failed attempts I tried to explain to the anaesthetist that I could feel a painful pulling on the right side of my back when she was inserting the needle, on both times she constantly asked 'what I meant' and no matter how I explained it she still couldn't understand me. On the third attempt I gave up from exhaustion and just agreed that the epidural was fine. I felt like she had not listened to me at all. After she told me in front of my midwives that 'I had made it difficult for her to do the epidural because I was a nurse' I was so embarrassed. Over the course of the next 5 hours I went on to have the epidural wear off 3 times and my midwife constantly having to give me breakthrough doses. I could not move my lower body at all but somehow I could feel every single contraction. At this time when I should have felt cared for and supported I felt so confused, let down and pushed aside.

At this stage my son became distressed and his heart rate went up to 210bpm and my Obstetrician was phoned and I was taken to theatre for an emergency C-section. Thankfully the anaesthetist there fixed my epidural and supported me wholeheartedly throughout the experience.

Birth trauma impacted my physical body in the weeks that followed the birth of my son. The week that I was in hospital after my son was born I struggled to breastfeed him because I had lost complete feeling in one single derma-plane of my lower back. This affected me because I couldn't sit for a long period of time before my back felt numb and eventually if I did push through it the numbness turned into severe pain. I let the midwives know and the same anaesthetist that caused it came to review me. Again she dismissed my concerns and told me she didn't understand what I meant when I described the numbness and pain.

At this stage I was over it and decided to not tell anyone anymore if I had pain because I felt like no one was listening to me nor that they cared. Due to this my breastfeeding journey came to a halt for almost 8 weeks, I had given up trying anymore because the numbness and pain was still there. Luckily my midwife at my obstetricians office booked me in for an appointment at hospital with their lactation consultant who assisted with positions comfortable for me and I was able to recommence my breastfeeding journey.