

Submission
No 732

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Miss Jacqueline Barwell

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Partially
Confidential

My name is Jacqueline Bardwell, I am a 33 yr old woman with a now 2 year old child. I had my baby at _____ Hospital in May 2021.

I am deeply saddened and mortified by the events that occurred during my time at Hospital, particularly around the way my partner and I were treated once the decision for the c-section was agreed upon and during the procedure by both the obstetrician Dr _____ and the Anaesthetist _____. Below is a timeline of events that occurred.

7am arrive birth unit and meet midwife

7:30 first vaginal examination 3cm dilated

9am start oxytocin break waters attach trace cord

12-1pm vaginal examination by _____ and _____ still 3cm, contractions, epidural administered by _____

Baby heart rate would drop on contractions - but stable

1-5pm contractions but zero pain advised cord maybe around the neck or sensitive to synthetic oxytocin, which was dialled back

5pm vagina examination by senior obstetrician _____ advised still only 3cm

5-30pm advised c-section would take place

Baby stable would have to wait 2-3 hrs 4 hrs max

8pm pushed back again as baby stable

10pm disconnected from epidural and wheeled down to theatre room, contractions began to come back immediately, baby still stable

In the waiting bay for theatre was advised that we would again be pushed back as another emergency is taking priority.

labour pains intense had to request top up of epidural with unknown medication wheeled back to birthing unit to wait

12am wheeled back to theatre room still no epidural attached labour pains commencing again. Had to again request a top up of the epidural while waiting for the team to set up the room whilst singing and listening to music.

12-30am wheeled into theatre labour pains still intense can feel all contractions and sensation in legs.

In the operating theatre:

Asked by _____ to scoot over to the operating table from birthing unit bed as I still had feeling in my legs.

Trace to be removed. Midwife asked for consent to check how dilated I was before attempting to remove trace. Trace was stuck in baby's head and an attempt was made to remove. No discomfort. That's when the surgeon Dr _____ made the midwife step aside and without consent barbarically shoved his hand up me and started pulling and tugging at the trace attached to my baby's head. I yelled out in pain and discomfort from the forceful pulling and tension in my vagina from the surgeon trying to get the probe out, however I was ignored and he continued trying to get it out. Eventually after a viscous pull and tug he managed to get the probe out and his assistant came over to the table and made a comment "oh what a mess" and starting cleaning up the operating table under me (shaming me for the end result of what the surgeon did to me)

Meanwhile _____ was testing the effect of the epidural with ice. I could feel the ice every time - maybe not the same strength but said I could feel it. I felt the pinch test with the tweezers. More anaesthetic was administered. They turned the operating table up and down while I was strapped to the bed. _____ continued to test the ice up higher near my ribs. Could still feel the ice. Eventually the surgeon said "I'll test the incision point" and started to test asking me if I could feel it. I replied yes I can feel that and then he asked "any sharp pain?" Which I replied "no sharp pain but I can feel it" in which he responded "starting to cut!" I could feel the surgeon make the incision meanwhile my partner Nathan was still outside in the waiting bay. As he cut me open I asked "where's Nathan!?" Which he replied "he's coming." As the surgeon continued I could feel the sharp pain of ripping and tearing to which I yelled out hysterically "I can feel that, you're hurting me, owwwww ow oww." Nathan then was brought into the operating theatre having to walked past me cut open with me screaming out hysterically in distress and pain. He sat by my head and could feel me attempting to lift my body off the table.

_____ attempted to put gas over my mouth but I moved my head as I was hyperventilating from the trauma of what was happening with my body that I could not breathe it in.

As I yelled out in agony I again was not listened to and the surgeon replied "I can see the baby" and with that I felt a forceful push on my ribs which winded me and they lowered the curtain to show us our baby. At this point Nathan and I were in such a state that we could not enjoy that moment

again attempted to put gas on me as he asked "we need to stitch you up, can you persevere with the gas?" In which I replied how long will that take 5mins!? I consider myself a strong woman with a high pain tolerance and if it was 5mins I could have persevered, however he replied "45mins" in which I responded "no way! Put me under!!!" To which I was finally put to sleep and woke up in recovery.

From all of that, What breaks my heart the most is, throughout my whole pregnancy I have been dreaming of the moment I meet my baby girl with Nathan. That moment and beautiful memory was robbed of me by the malicious malpractice of the surgeon and his team. Not only was I violated and shamed on the operating table whilst conscious by an obstetrician that failed to ask me for my consent, I now have a scar that will be a constant reminder of the events that occurred. I wasn't listened to when I was in distress and voicing that I could feel pain and discomfort. They attempted to silence me by suffocating me with gas whilst yelling out on the table in distress. The procedure was rushed, there was no need to rush as my baby was stable, hence why my c-section was pushed back twice.

They didn't take the time to ensure the epidural was working before they began cutting into me and before Nathan was in the room by my side. Nathan had to walk past me being cut open with me screaming out on the operating table in pain - no one should have to see that in a hospital. We live in Australia with some of the most leading health professionals - this shouldn't be happening in 2021. The fact that both the obstetrician and Anaesthetist did not come and check on me the next morning clearly indicates they know they are responsible for the trauma and distress they have cause me and my family. What confuses me is that a hospital is meant to be a safe place, I was a patient at my most vulnerable. I had put my trust in that team and that trust was abused.