

Submission
No 735

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

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Partially
Confidential

I have given birth in _____ Hospital and received antenatal care here also throughout both of my pregnancies.

My first child was born in January 2019. Throughout my pregnancy I suffered with hyperemesis gravidarum and was not treated with dignity during antenatal appointments. I was thankfully given help through a wonderful GP privately. I felt as though I was just a number during my hospital visits and my needs were not important concerning my inability to keep most of my food and water down for roughly 30 weeks.

When I finally gave birth to my son, I was told I HAD to be induced as my son was measuring small... he was 3.75kg. During my induction I was treated poorly by midwives, processes were not explained and questions regarding the process were explained in a way that implied it wasn't important I be in "the know". Once my waters broke, I went into active labour immediately, with my contractions being only minutes apart. I pressed the buzzer for help and also called my husband who made it to the hospital, parked and got inside the ward before any staff member came to see me. My husband went to check what was happening and returned with 3 midwives, all of which laughed, made condescending comments, one being "if you think you're in pain now, wait for the next 24 hours" followed by laughter.

I pleaded to be checked for progression and was met with a stunned midwife who informed me I was right, I was 6cm dilated within an hour and they immediately rushed me to the birthing unit. During my birth, my midwife was not warm and friendly, she seemed more concerned with asking my husband if I would be making a complaint regarding my earlier treatment. She was also rushing to get my bloods done which should have been done the night prior upon submission as I had made it clear throughout the 10 months I wanted an epidural and also since checking in to give birth the night before. The midwife told me she needed the bloods back to order an epidural. 15 minutes prior to my son's birth, a 4 hour labour, the man arrived to administer an epidural and told me he was only just called and it was useless now and wouldn't kick in. My son was born not breathing with the umbilical cord wrapped around his neck, none of this was explained to me, meanwhile I began to haemorrhage.

I had a second degree tear and had haemorrhaged so needed a catheter, I was quite uncomfortable and alone overnight with my newborn. I bled through my sheets and asked for help. A midwife told me it wasn't her job and the sheets are down the hall, to go find them and sort it myself. I had to wait until the next morning for my husband to be allowed to come and change them. Understandably, we were horrified and insisted on discharging that day so we could be home, comfortable and be cared for.

Unfortunately I was back in hospital only 2 weeks later with a postpartum infection. Again, I was back in the maternity ward with the same staff who were awful to me prior. No answers, different doctors everyday for a week straight. No one could tell me what was wrong, midwives were rude and uncaring. I was afraid and didn't know if I was going to be okay, struggling with postpartum feelings and wondering if this infection was going to kill me. They had no answers and lacked sympathy. Were always "unable to find the doctors". I broke down on the third day of no answers and told them how upset all of this was making me, how I just wanted to see a doctor and ask

questions about my situation, instead - they sent in a social worker to discuss postpartum depression with me.. laughable. I have never had PPD, thankfully. This was insulting, I was upset at the lack of care.

I asked for a meeting and to be contacted to discuss all of this when I was discharged, I never received a call.

My second pregnancy in 2021, I gave birth in October.

Haemorrhaging was a huge concern and I made a point to discuss it at every appointment, to ensure they were prepared for that. Each appointment my notes were not read prior to me entering the room, again, I was a number. Each doctor told me not to worry about haemorrhaging and they would be prepared and that I shouldn't worry about it. I had HG again, again this was not emphasised with and dealt with by private GP.

At 19 weeks I had a scan that showed I had a shortened cervix, I should have been offered a stitch, I asked and was declined, instead I was told it was fine. A few weeks later I was back in the hospital as it had shorted again RAPIDLY, still no stitch. I was given steroid shots, progesterone and told to back a bag incase I gave birth. My child was not at a viable age yet. My cervix sat at .4mm for months. I was told to go on bed rest (that was about 12 weeks of my life). I was eligible for a stitch and should have been given one. I was already 5cm dilated when I came to the hospital for my induction.

Low iron, being induced, pitocin, previous second degree tear. These reasons all made my chances of haemorrhaging again extremely high.

My iron was tested throughout my pregnancy and not once was I told it was low, or that I should supplement it. I should not have been induced and definitely should not have been given pitocin. Again, I was told I had to induce due to my babys size, who was 3.5kg. No one mentioned any of the risks above, until I spoke to who apologised profusely and said NONE of this should of ever happened and how NEGLIGENT the hospital was with my care.

My birth was traumatising. I wanted an epidural and was continuously told by the two midwives I had that I didn't need one and they knew I could do it without one. My needs were dismissed and I felt pressured. I reminded them that morning to be ready for potential haemorrhage. I gave birth within 1 hour of having my waters broken and given pitocin. A very short labour. Again I haemorrhaged and as this was happening the staff looked at me and said "why didn't you tell anyone you are at risk of haemorrhage?" - I couldn't believe this. I told them at every opportunity, every appointment and even that morning. With no pain relief, doctors swarmed in and told me they needed to manually extract my placenta as it had broken apart inside of me. This was done with no pain relief. I was then told that if I have another baby, I need to tell them that I haemorrhage so they can put intravenous canulas in both of my hands to make resolving the bleed faster. As if this was my fault? That I didn't do enough to prevent this?

It was the most awful experience of my life. I could have died because of doctors and midwives that lack care, people that shouldn't be in these jobs, people that see so many people each day and don't see them as people. When I asked for Panadol after this, I was treated as though I was a drug addict, I've never done drugs and don't even drink alcohol. I have struggled with iron deficiency since both births and still struggle regardless of PAYING out of pocket for an infusion at my GP as it was decided by the hospital that regardless of losing over 3L of blood across both births, I was apparently fine and my levels would return to normal on their own over time.

My husband stood in the room and sobbed, holding out newborn daughter, wondering how he would tell our 2 year old son that mummy wasn't coming home as I bled out in front of him as they desperately tried to stop the bleeding. They told us that this should have happened whilst I was under anaesthesia however they needed to rush, and yes I am grateful for that, I am grateful to be here. However I would have and should have had an epidural, because I asked for one, and was declined.

I was born to be a mother, there is nothing more joyful and important to me than mothering my children. I always dreamed I would have more, my husband and I desperately want more, however, after the care I have received and these traumatic experiences, we are both too afraid to try again, because- what if I don't make it home next time? What if the care has gone even more down hill? We want to go private, however if I have these issues during birth, I will be transferred immediately back to the public hospital, which is terrifying because we have no trust in them to keep us safe.

Please do something about this. Please make these changes. I know too many people who have heartbreaking stories. This isn't okay.